SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 479. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 5TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

BEECHAM'S PASTIME PARCEL!

THE PRIZE COMPETITION FOR £100.

All competitors are now informed that the correct solutions of the "Oracles" were as follows

A.....	Burnt Mill.	C.....	Sparkford.	E.....	Lightship.
B.....	Ash Green.	D.....	Fire-eater.	F.....	The Lost Chord.

Six Competitors only were successful in giving the proper answer to each of the six puzzles, and the £100 has been equally divided, a cheque for **£16 13s. 4d.** being sent to each on February 11th.

The names and addresses of the fortunate six are: Miss Beatrice A. Plummer, 14 Calverley Park, Tunbridge Wells; Miss Edith May Adams, Fernleigh, Heeley Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham; Mrs. F. E. Bickerton, 101, Evershot Road, Tollington Park, London, N.; Mr. Thomas Shepherd, 9 Hall Street, Spring Bank, Hull; Mr. W. Lonnon, 9 Queensgate Terrace, Freedom, Plymouth; Sergeant James Cochrane, 2nd Battalion Cameron Highlanders, Fort George, N.B.

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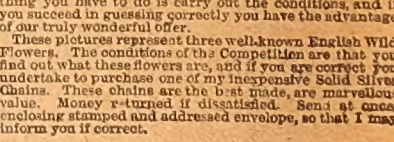

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SHORT STORIES.

No. 479.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending March 5th, 1898.

THE POST-MORTEM AUTOPSY.

I was always very fond of him, poor fellow! Philip was one of those gentle, sympathetic, almost feminine natures, that appealed to the feelings of an elderly and childless woman like myself by their very feebleness. It was well that he was not left to make his way in the world.

Old James Forrester, his father, left him a comfortable income, with the principal strictly tied up, so that he could not make away with it. He ought to have led a fairly comfortable life of it, with his artistic tastes, pleasant manners, and agreeable exterior. He was always popular, and had hosts of friends, until a bitter love disappointment rendered him morbid and misanthropic.

It was cruel of Beatrice Raymond to treat him as she did. Not that I blame her for not marrying him. A man with hereditary consumption in the background as an inheritance to bestow upon his children, is not fitted to enter into the bonds of matrimony with any woman, and I am the last one to blame any woman for maintaining that opinion. Only she ought not to have

Edited By George Arthur Pearson.

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lured him on to love her. She was beautiful, brilliant, and fascinating, and she certainly flirted with him desperately, in a way that probably would have only proved pleasant pastime to a good many men. But to Philip it did serious harm. He never was the same man afterwards.

I shall never forget the day that he came to see me and told me the whole story. I was always like an old maiden aunt to him, for he had no mother—my poor Philip!—and so he made me his confidante in all important matters.

"And what do you mean to do now, Philip?" I asked him, after he had told me the whole story of his wooing Miss Raymond, and of the positive way in which she had refused him.

"I do not know, Miss Anson," he answered in a dreary way. "Sometimes I think of going to Paris to study art."

"The very best thing you could do!" I answered briskly, interrupting him mercilessly.

"But to what end? My life is a desolate one. I have no incentive to work."

"Work for work's sake—for art's sake, my boy. You are still so young," he was then just twenty-eight, "that you may shape for yourself a very noble career."

"What! with my fragile health—my shattered hopes? It is not very likely."

"Try—only try."

And I had at least the satisfaction of seeing a gleam of reviving interest in life shining in his eyes before he left me.

He did go on to the Continent, and took up the study of art, but he lacked strength of character and steadiness of purpose to enable him to achieve any distinction as a painter.

He lacked, too, the spur of necessity. His daily bread was not depending upon his efforts, so he relaxed those efforts whenever he felt ill or depressed.

He studied awhile in Paris, and then he went to Munich. Finally I heard of him in Rome, always doing something with his pencils and palette, but nothing that ever amounted to much. He went on several long journeys, and a tour that he took through Austria and Hungary seemed to interest him very much.

He wrote to me regularly, but he had not the gift of penning very interesting letters, so that he gave me merely a list of the places he visited, and added but little concerning himself and his own impressions and occupations.

After a year or two his letter slackened, and at last they ceased entirely. Sometimes I would meet persons who had seen him abroad, and the accounts they gave of him were far from satisfactory. He had grown more morbid and cynical than ever, and, moreover, his health was in a most precarious condition. He had caught a series of severe colds during his Austrian journey, and, though partially restored by a new course of treatment prescribed by a young and highly-gifted Hungarian physician, there was no doubt but that his lungs were seriously affected.

"He talks now," said my informant, "of going to the United States, and of settling down next winter in Florida to give his new doctor's system a full and patient trial. He has, too, an idea of painting some pictures of negro life, and from what he said I think he has an idea of combining the two; that is, of taking a studio somewhere, and of working and trying the new remedies at one and the same time."

"Do you know anything about this new course of treatment?" I asked.

"Nothing—except that it consists in gradually increasing doses of some virulent poison. This much I got Forrester to tell me; but he is a reserved, unsociable fellow, and does not care to talk much about himself or his ailments."

Reserved—unsociable! How he had changed. Alas! my poor Philip!

It was only a few weeks later that I was astonished by the arrival of Philip himself at my little home.

"Only to say 'How are you?' and then 'Good-bye,' Miss Anson," he declared. "I could not pass through London without coming to take a look at you. I start for New Orleans to-morrow." And then he sat down and talked for more than an hour concerning his plans for the future.

I found him terribly changed, with all the signs of advanced consumption visible in his countenance, and in his wasted form. But he spoke cheerfully respecting his own health, and also expressed the utmost faith in the new cure invented and prescribed by his Hungarian physician.

On that subject, however, he seemed unwilling to talk, and soon diverged into an account of his plans for the coming winter, and of his projected picture. I had never seen him so eager and so interested in anything relating to himself since his love affair with Miss Raymond, and I feel encouraged respecting him, despite the unsatisfactory condition of his health.

He took a very affectionate farewell of me, and went away; and the next tidings I had of him came in the shape of a letter that he addressed to me from New Orleans.

He wrote hopefully, and in good spirits. He had found just the residence that he required, namely, a furnished villa in the suburbs of the city. He had also found a most admirable model for his projected picture in the shape of an old negress who kept a fruit stall in the square, opposite the cathedral.

"She is the most curious and picturesque old creature imaginable," he wrote. "There is a tradition current among the coloured people here that she is over a hundred years old, and certainly she looks it. She is a native-born African, and claims to have been a priestess, or a princess, or a witch, in her own land—perhaps all three.

"Old Yana, as she is called, might pose for a picture of 'She,' after that bewitching heroine's death, with all her thousands of years of life accumulated on her head. Her face shows the most extraordinary agglomeration possible of wrinkles, and her short, curly wool is as white as snow. I have engaged this venerable personage to act as my cook and housekeeper and general factotum, and she will sit to me in her hours of leisure. So you may expect me back in the spring, and a picture that shall be a masterpiece, if a remarkable model and painstaking execution can make it so.

"As to my health, I find that it is rapidly improving. I will venture now to confess to you what the nature really was of the treatment that I have been following. It consisted of minute doses of arsenic, to be gradually increased as my system became capable of enduring larger quantities of the poison. I have derived the utmost benefit from it, especially in the matter of relief from oppression of breathing. My respiration has of

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late become so easy and comfortable that it is a positive pleasure to me to breathe."

I received two short letters from him after that, in one of which he enclosed a photograph of the old negress, Yana. I did not like the face that looked up sullenly and scowlingly from the picture. It was the face, so it seemed to me, of a being with unlimited possibilities of cruelty in her nature, and with an element of barbarism underlying the thin veneer of civilisation acquired by long residence in a Christian land.

As I looked upon the wrinkled features, there rose involuntarily before me memories of Ashantee kings and their dreadful "customs," and all sorts of horrid deeds perpetrated by the savage tribes of Africa. Yet I was far enough from suspecting the truth.

I scarcely know how to conclude my story. What remains for me to tell is so inconceivably horrible that I dread to record the incidents as they actually occurred.

Towards the end of January I received a letter from Philip, begging me to come to New Orleans and pay him a visit. He wrote in great depression of spirits. The arsenic treatment seemed to have reached a point with him when to stop it would prove fatal, and when unmistakable symptoms showed that his system had nearly reached a point when no more doses of the poison could be endured.

"Moreover," he wrote, "I think that old Yana is growing dissatisfied with her position with me. She has become sulky of late, and refuses to speak; and sometimes I can see her glaring at me out of those bloodshot eyes of hers, with a ferocious expression that actually chills the blood in my veins. I may be growing fanciful, however. I am ill and lonely, and long to see you, dear Miss Anson. Do come and spend a few weeks with me, and then I will return with you to London. Cable me word if you will come, and also the day of your arrival, and I will meet you in New York."

I decided at once to accept the invitation, and to go and look after the poor fellow in his evil plight. I sent the dispatch as he had directed before I started. But when my long, tiresome journey was at an end, and I at length reached New Orleans, there was no one waiting to meet me at the station; Philip was nowhere to be seen.

Fearing that he was ill I hired a carriage, and was on the point of starting at once for his abode, when it occurred to me that the presence of a physician might be useful in case Philip had suddenly become worse. So I appealed to a young man, Dr. James Lake, who had been a fellow passenger, and who had shown me a good deal of kindness on the way. After hearing my explanation of the circumstances he willingly agreed to accompany me.

We set out without delay, and reached the villa in safety. But, to my astonishment, it seemed utterly deserted. We knocked and rang at the front door for some time in vain. Then Dr. Lake, who was an active and energetic young fellow, proposed trying to gain an entrance by one of the back windows. He went away, and in a very few minutes he unlocked and unbarred the front door from within. But as I was about to enter he waved me back.

"Do not come in, Miss Anson," he whispered, in a hoarse, horror-stricken tone. "Something frightful has been taking place here. Let me search the house thoroughly before you try to enter."

His fresh, young face was white with a ghastly pallor. Hastily scribbling a few lines on a card, he summoned our driver, and sent him off at full gallop to the city with a message of which I caught only one word—"police." Then he went in, and throwing open the windows of the drawing-room, he beckoned to me, after a brief investigation, to enter.

There was nothing at all astonishing to be seen in the room. Philip had evidently used it as a studio. The table was strewn with brushes and colour tubes, and his palette lay conspicuous in the midst.

On an easel was placed the finished picture about which he had so often written to me. It was a full-length figure of the old negress, about half the size of life, and represented her as seated beside her stand of oranges.

It was painted with a breadth and freedom of touch, and a subtle sense of colour, of which I could hardly believe Philip Forrester capable. Sketches and studies, mostly of the same grim personage, leant against the walls or were piled upon the chairs. But Philip—where was he?

I was on the point of leaving the room to go in search of him, when Dr. Lake, who had quitted me abruptly on my entrance, returned, bearing something in his hands, over which he had thrown a large handkerchief. He laid his burden on the table. A faint, horrible odour stole through the room.

"You are a brave woman—a strong woman, Miss Ansom," he said impressively. "Can you stand a terrible shock?"

"I can—I will."

"Then tell me if you recognise these features," he said.

He drew aside the handkerchief, and there before me lay a ghastly severed human head. I shrieked in terror at the sight.

"Compose yourself, Miss Anson. Look again, and tell me if you know who this is."

I forced myself to fix my shuddering gaze on the dreadful object before me. Yes, I knew but too well the livid countenance on which I looked. It was that of Philip Forrester.

"But who has done this deed?" I cried. "Where is the negress Yana?"

"She, too, is dead. Her body is lying on the floor in the kitchen. This," and he touched the poor head as he spoke, "I found hidden behind a pile of wood in the out-house."

It was not till the inquest was held that the riddle of this mystery was fully unravelled. I will not dwell upon the hideous details of the evidence. Suffice it to say that Dr. Lake's medical science enabled him to discover the truth.

Old Yana had undoubtedly belonged in her youth to one of the cannibal tribes of Africa; and, indeed, the testimony was elicited at the trial that she had been in the habit of dilating on her delight in the feasts of human flesh, of which she had partaken as a girl. She had slain her unfortunate master, probably in a sudden and frenzied revival of her old instincts.

Dr. Lake discovered the traces of more than one horrible banquet in which she had indulged after her crime. But that crime had brought with it its own swift and singular punishment. The flesh of the arsenic eater, saturated as it was with the deadly drug, was in itself a poison, and the old cannibal had perished from its effects.

L. H. H.

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The Seven Years' League.

"You don't look a day older, Tina."

"And you haven't changed a bit, Claire. Of course I have changed considerably. If I hadn't, why should I have come all these miles to keep our seven years' compact?"

"But you look just the same. You are as pretty as ever. Nobody in the world would take you for twenty-three. Are you sure now, Tina, quite sure that you aren't as good as engaged? You remember we promised to tell each other just as soon as we became interested in a man."

"Well, dear, you begin, then."

"*I* begin? Why, Christine Markham, who said that I was interested in any man?"

"Nobody yet, but I want you to say it. You don't suppose I'm going to do all the confessing, do you?"

"I don't see why I should be the first. You're the elder." Claire flushed a little as she leant forward in her impulsive way and kissed her friend. They had met this morning for the first time in seven years. They had parted last at school, and had agreed to meet seven years from that time. It was an idea of Christine's.

"You know we are said to be a different person physically every seven years," she said.

Christine was a country girl. Claire lived in London, but in spite of the distance between their homes, they had confidently expected to see each other now and then during the interval. But Claire had gone abroad some time after leaving school, and meantime, the correspondence between the two began to flag. Each had her own interests, growing out of her immediate environments, which it was natural should overshadow an intimacy which, in the nature of things, was now but a memory. But as the date for the reunion drew near, each recalled it, and two letters in reference to the event crossed each other. Then the correspondence became brisk, till it was settled that Christine should come to London and visit her friend. And now they had been together just two hours.

"But I'm only a year older, Claire," was Christine's reply to the other's final remark. "And besides, I can see that you have something to tell. Now begin."

Christine's eyes were fastened intently upon her companion's face. She had noted the flush when it first made its appearance. She felt that it betokened something, and hers was a romantic nature, else probably she would not have thought of this seven years' reunion. She was determined now that her friend should make a confidant of her.

"But if one hasn't anything to tell, how can one begin?" Claire had dropped Christine's hand, and was twisting her handkerchief between her fingers nervously. "I'm younger than you. It's more natural that you should have an—affair than that I should. Tell me all about it, Tina, dear, won't you?"

Christine suddenly leant forward, and took her friend in her arms. Pressing her cheek close against that of Claire, she whispered: "Ah, you sly puss—you little diplomatist! You think that I will tell you my secret for the pleasure of hearing yours. Well, I will. Is it a bargain? Come, on the sacred honour of the seven years' league."

Christine straightened herself, and with a solemn expression held one hand raised, pointing to the ceiling.

"Ah, Tina, Tina, are you really in love with someone?"

Claire put her two hands together, and sat looking at her companion with a rapturous expression.

"Swear first," responded the other with mock seriousness. "You will tell me your experience if I tell you mine?"

"Ah, Tina, how ridiculous you are! I said there wasn't anything for me to tell."

Down came Christine's hand into her lap.

"Then, of course, there can be no exchange," she said decisively.

Claire looked disappointed, hurt almost.

"But that isn't fair, Tina," she exclaimed, putting an arm round her friend's waist. "It—isn't my fault I haven't any story to tell."

"Ah, then, is it his?" broke in the other quickly. "Come now, Claire, if I tell you my little romance, there is no reason why you shouldn't return the compliment. You see you can't deceive me. I know you have one. Now then, is it a bargain?"

"Well, if you won't call it a romance, but just want me to say a word or two about—about the way a certain person impresses me, I'll agree. Now, tell me your experience. What is he like?"

Claire had hung her head, and moved her foot uneasily backwards and forwards across the carpet during the first part of this speech. Now she arranged herself more comfortably on the divan, took one of Christine's

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hands to hold in hers during the recital, and prepared to listen.

"Oh, he is tall, and—well, he is neither dark nor fair, but very handsome. I am sure you would think so, too, Claire, if you were to see him. And so smart."

"Where was it that you met him?" Claire went on.

"It was at a dance——"

"But about the man. What did he do? What did you say? Do you write to each other, and when do you expect to see him again? You're not engaged, are you?"

"Oh, dear me, no! I haven't seen him now for—for several weeks."

"And he likes you, does he? But of course he does, or you wouldn't be telling me anything about it."

"Well, he hasn't told me so yet," rejoined Christine. "But now it is your turn, Claire. I'm just dying to hear of your Romeo."

"No, indeed, it isn't my turn yet. There's lots you must tell me first. You—you haven't a photograph of him with you, have you?"

"Why, Claire, of course not."

"Then describe him more minutely. You say he is tall, and neither fair nor dark. What colour is his hair?"

"Brown, a sort of chestnut, you know."

"And does he wear a moustache or a beard?"

"Just a moustache. Don't you remember we used to say we'd never have a lover unless he wore a moustache?"

"Oh, yes; and this is the ideal one. Well, how old is he?"

"About twenty-six or twenty-eight. Of course, I don't know about that for certain."

"And is he rich?"

"He's pretty well off. Naturally he wouldn't be the ideal lover if he wasn't."

"What business is he in?" Claire went on.

Christine did not answer immediately. She sat looking straight at Claire, who was now holding both her friend's hands and gazing at her in a sort of rapt daze. Finally she said: "Business? Oh, yes, he's a lawyer."

"A lawyer?" Claire repeated the words. She drew her hands away with a sudden movement, then looked confused and got up and crossed the room to pull the blind down a few inches, although the sun had not yet begun to send its rays under it.

"Yes. You haven't forgotten that day we counted the buttons on my ulster and it came out 'lawyer' for me? What was it for you, Claire?"

"I—I cannot remember, Tina, it was so long ago. But what is the lawyer's name?" Claire had picked up a fan from the centre table. She held this now so as partially to screen her face as she put the question.

"Haven't I told you enough yet, Claire? Remember every question that I have answered you must answer for me."

"Yes, yes, Tina. But his name, tell me that."

Claire seemed strangely excited. She tapped the fan impatiently against her teeth. Her eyes were dilated; the flush on her cheeks was spreading to her temples, where it seemed to turn to moisture that stood out in little beads unheeded.

"All right, then, my dear. But a name for a name, remember that. Here it is—one that has always been my favourite, though—plain, simple John."

Claire gave a sort of gasp behind the fan. She put out one hand as though to clutch Christine, then drew it quickly back again. Her eyes closed, her body swayed from side to side, and then her friend sprang up and put both arms about her.

"Claire, Claire!" she cried. "What is the matter?"

She placed her gently down on the divan. Then she turned quickly to the dressing-table, looking for some restoratives. She picked up a vinaigrette, and after applying it, had the satisfaction of seeing Claire open her eyes.

"My dear girl, what is it?" whispered Christine, bending over her. "Your hand is as cold as ice. Do you feel faint. Shall I call your mother?"

Claire turned and grasped the other's arm almost fiercely.

"Oh, no, no!" she cried. "Say nothing about it to anyone. It is nothing. I am all right now." She raised herself to a sitting position. "Now tell me where you would like me to take you this afternoon. Shall we go for a drive, or would you prefer a *matinée*?"

Christine made no reply for the moment. She stood there by the divan looking down upon her friend earnestly, solemnly.

"Claire," she said suddenly, "you must tell me what is the matter with you. It is something that I said; something about that man."

"Don't, oh, Tina, don't!" Claire raised her hands as if to ward off a blow.

"Yes, I will, I must," the other went on. "I have been wicked, brutal, but I didn't know, truly, Claire, I didn't know. It is only a coincidence. It all came of my love of romance."

"Don't speak of it again, Tina. If you do I—" Claire had raised her voice, but it suddenly failed her, and she dropped weakly back among the cushions, covering her face with her hands.

"I must speak of it, Claire. You are all wrong. You have believed every word I said, and there is not one of them true. It is like Marjory Daw. You have read that, Claire? There wasn't any Marjory, you know."

"Well?" Claire had taken her hands from her face. She was looking up at her friend's lips as if her very life hung on the words that should next issue from them.

"I never met any such man as I have just described. I made it all up out of the ideal we had had at school, just to get you to tell me your story."

"And you never knew a lawyer whose first name is John, and who has brown hair?"

"No, dear. I couldn't possibly have told you his last name. It was very wrong of me, and to show you how penitent I am I shall not ask you to tell me your story. Not now, at any rate. Do you forgive me, Claire?"

The other's answer was to reach up, draw her friend's face down to hers, and in this attitude to weep a few tears, in which all that there was of sorrow was not for herself, but for Christine, who did not know her joy.

A. L. W.

SIX MORE BURGLARY CLAIMS PAID BY PEARSON'S.

There seems to have been an epidemic of burglaries within the last few weeks. No fewer than six separate claims have recently been paid under the Burglary Insurance scheme in connection with Pearson's Weekly.

Particulars of the scheme appear in the current issue.

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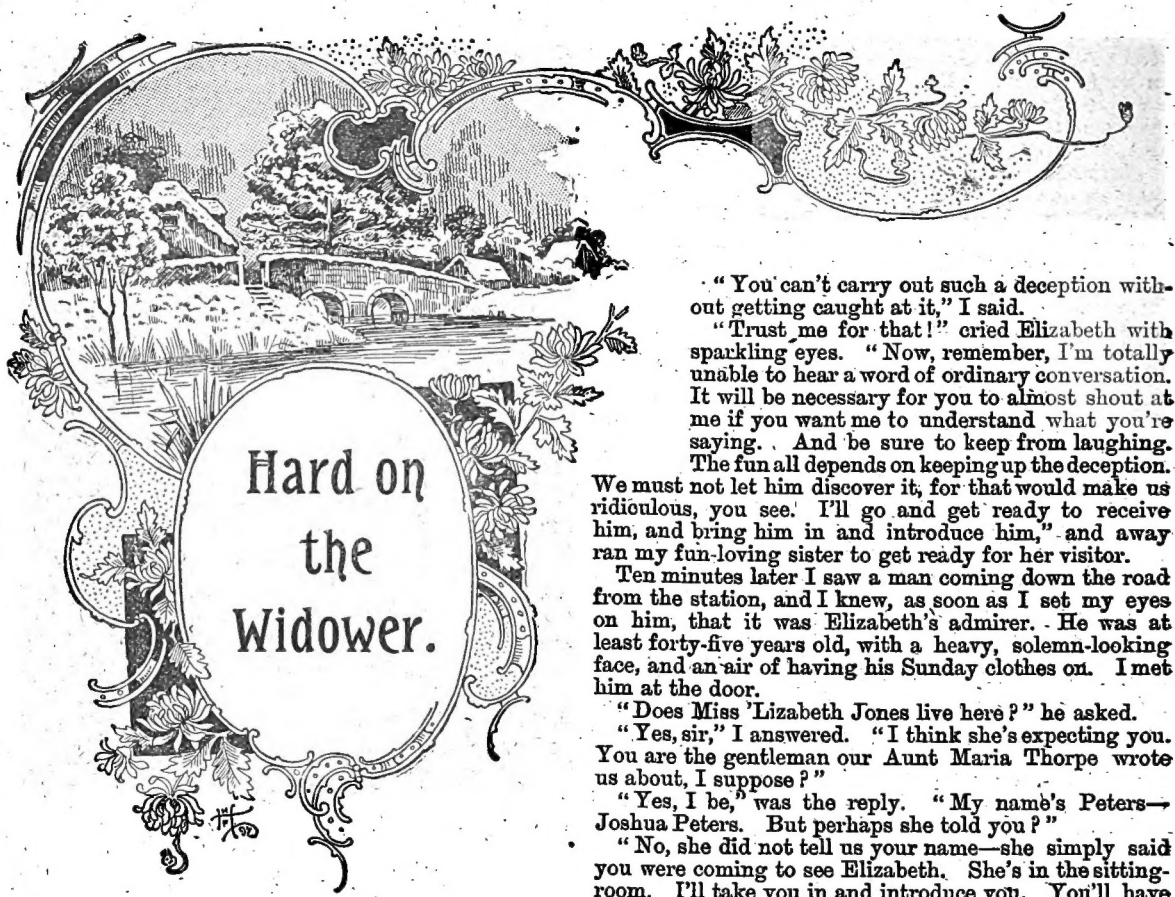

"You can't guess what's going to happen," cried my sister Elizabeth one morning as she came running up the path from the gate, where she had been to meet the postman. She had an open letter in her hand.

"Has someone left you a fortune?" I asked.

"Oh, better than that!" was the reply. "I'm going to have a beau. Listen," and she proceeded to read the letter:

DEAR ELIZABETH,—I write to tell you that a friend of mine has fallen in love with your photograph. He is a widower and on the look-out for another wife. He happened to see your photo, and it won his susceptible heart at once. He asked all kinds of questions about you, and when he found out that you were "fancy free," he said he "had a good mind to come an' see you. Perhaps there was the chance he'd been lookin' for." I advised him to come. "You can tell by trying," I said, and he's coming. He will be there on Wednesday. Be kind to the poor man, and—send me an invitation to the wedding. Hastily,

AUNT MARIA.

"That's just like Aunt Maria, isn't it?" cried Elizabeth, half amused and half indignant. "She's bound to have fun at somebody's expense."

"To-day is Wednesday, Elizabeth," I said with a smile. "You can look for your admirer by the next train. The letter ought to have got here yesterday, you see, by its date."

"I'm thoroughly out of patience with Aunt Maria," said Elizabeth. "I know what I'll do. I'll pretend I'm deaf, and I'll have some fun out of it as well as Aunt Maria."

"You can't carry out such a deception without getting caught at it," I said.

"Trust me for that!" cried Elizabeth with sparkling eyes. "Now, remember, I'm totally unable to hear a word of ordinary conversation. It will be necessary for you to almost shout at me if you want me to understand what you're saying. And be sure to keep from laughing. The fun all depends on keeping up the deception. We must not let him discover it, for that would make us ridiculous, you see. I'll go and get ready to receive him, and bring him in and introduce him," and away ran my fun-loving sister to get ready for her visitor.

Ten minutes later I saw a man coming down the road from the station, and I knew, as soon as I set my eyes on him, that it was Elizabeth's admirer. He was at least forty-five years old, with a heavy, solemn-looking face, and an air of having his Sunday clothes on. I met him at the door.

"Does Miss 'Lizabeth Jones live here?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," I answered. "I think she's expecting you. You are the gentleman our Aunt Maria Thorpe wrote us about, I suppose?"

"Yes, I be," was the reply. "My name's Peters—Joshua Peters. But perhaps she told you?"

"No, she did not tell us your name—she simply said you were coming to see Elizabeth. She's in the sitting-room. I'll take you in and introduce you. You'll have to speak rather loud, for Elizabeth's just a trifle hard of hearing."

"That's bad," said Mr. Peters, pulling out a big red handkerchief and wiping his perspiring face. "Awfully warm, ain't it?"

"Quite warm," I responded.

By that time we were at the sitting-room door. Elizabeth sat by the window with her back towards us.

"Elizabeth," I said, raising my voice. No reply.

"She must be dretful deaf not to hear that," said Mr. Peters. "How long's she been so?"

I did not dare trust myself to reply. I went up to Elizabeth and put my hand on her shoulder. She turned and saw us.

"Why didn't you speak when you came in?" she asked, rising.

"She did—she hollered," said Mr. Peters, in a sort of stage aside.

"Elizabeth, this is Mr. Peters, the gentleman Aunt Maria wrote about," I said, close to her ear.

"Oh, yes, I understand," said Elizabeth, her face showing great delight and interest. "I'm happy to meet you, Mr. Peasley. Sit down, please. I hope you're well, Mr. Peasley."

"Peters, not Peasley," corrected her visitor.

"A little louder, please. I didn't quite catch what you said," and Elizabeth bent her head to listen.

"I said my name wasn't Peasley," shouted the other. "It's Peters."

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"Oh, yes, I understand now," responded Elizabeth. "I'm not so very deaf, still one has to talk rather loud for me to understand all they say."

"Your Aunt M'riar told me about you," said Mr. Peters, sitting down. "I've knowed her quite a long time."

"Aunt Maria dying? You must be mistaken, Mr. Peters. She didn't say anything about it in her letter."

"I said I'd knowed her quite a long time," said Mr. Peters, in a voice like a trumpet.

"Oh, yes; pardon me," said Elizabeth. "When you speak a trifle louder than usual, like that, I have no difficulty in understanding what you say."

"She must be awful deaf if she calls that a trifle louder than usual," said Mr. Peters.

I couldn't have kept my face straight much longer, so I busied myself about getting dinner, but I could hear every word of the conversation in the kitchen. Elizabeth kept him repeating his remarks until I fancied he was getting hoarse.

"I've always fancied I should like living on a farm," said Elizabeth. "Do you think the children would take kindly to a stepmother, Mr. Peters?"

"They'd have to, if I got married again," was his reply. "No trouble about that."

"No. I don't like cats," said Elizabeth. "I'd prefer a dog. Do you keep a dog, Mr. Peters?"

"You didn't catch my remark," he shouted.

"I think just as you do about that," responded Elizabeth. "I don't like to hear them bark. We seem to have quite a similarity of tastes, don't we, Mr. Peters?"

Presently dinner was ready, and they came out together and sat down to the meal. I told Elizabeth that I would wait on them. I knew I could never undergo the ordeal of sitting at table with them.

"I hope you like moonlight walks and boating, Mr. Peters? I do, so much!"

"Well, I can't say as I do," responded Mr. Peters. "Bein' out at night, 'specially on the water, don't agree with me. It makes me roomatick."

"Romantic? There it is again!" cried Elizabeth in delight. "I'm so glad you are, for I'm the most romantic girl you ever saw."

"I didn't say romantic," corrected Mr. Peters in a tone that made the dishes dance; "I said roomatick."

"Oh, pardon me," said Elizabeth; "but occasionally you seem to forget that I am a trifle deaf, and speak so low. But you'd get used to it in time."

"I don't b'leeve I ever would," said Mr. Peters to me. "Don't you s'pose somethin' could be done for her?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," I replied, turning away to hide my face.

All that afternoon my wicked sister kept that poor man shouting at her. By degrees he got hoarser and hoarser. Just before tea was ready he came into the kitchen where I was at work.

"I'm done up; my throat feels rougher 'n a grater. It's harder work to carry on a conversation with her than it is to drive a donkey. It's a pity she can't have somethin' done for her ears. She's smart and good-lookin', an' she seems to take a great likin' to me."

"You'd better talk with her about it," I suggested.

"I can't," said Mr. Peters. "I'm too tired. I think she gets worse to'ards night, for it's harder work to make her understand now than it was in the morning. I'll be goin' now. You can talk with her, an' if she is willin' to have her ears doctored, and it does any good, I'll come down ag'in. I don't see why your aunt didn't tell me about it. But, perhaps, she was afraid your sister'd lose the chance if she let on aforehand."

"I've enjoyed your visit so much, dear Mr. Peters," said Elizabeth, at parting. "Come again, won't you now, and soon?"

"That depends," shouted the poor man. "Your sister'll tell you what I've been sayin' to her, when I'm gone."

"Oh, yes, yes! I shall think of you when you're gone," said Elizabeth. "You'll write, won't you?"

"I'll see," said Mr. Peters.

When the gate closed behind poor Mr. Peters I sat down and laughed till I cried.

"Oh, Jane!" cried Elizabeth, dropping down on the floor, "I never had such fun in all my life; never! He shouted at me till the sound of his voice roared in my ears like thunder. I wouldn't wonder if it really made me deaf. Poor man! It's a great pity for me to lose such a chance."

And then Elizabeth and I laughed and cried together.

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Norman Wood, 24 Park Hill, Ealing, W. "The Young Llaners." By Kingston. 5s.

Mrs. H. A. Green, Bengeo Street, Bengeo, Hertford, Herts. "Thelma." By Marie Corelli. 6s.

T. E. Smith, 28 Ash Street, Bootle, Liverpool. "A Teacher's Bible." 10s. 6d.

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By M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

SUMMARY.

Yen How, a shrewd Chino-Japanese doctor, who has spent a portion of his life in almost every country in Europe studying the various nationalities and customs in all classes of life, falls desperately in love with an English nursemaid. His advances are rudely repulsed, however; but he leaves England with a fixed determination to win the object of his affections in spite of all opposition. The means he employs for this purpose are immeasurably vaster than the end.

Yen How goes first to Japan as a Japanese, where, by reason of his authority upon all matters connected with Europe and his high rank, he soon becomes a member of the Japanese Parliament. He rapidly becomes intimate with the prime minister, Marquis Ito, to whom he proposes a league between the two races of China and Japan, and an immense scheme by which Europe may be reduced to a waste, and China become the Empress of the Earth with scarcely an effort of her own. He then goes to China and becomes virtual ruler of that nation. In the course of a conversation which he has with Li Hung Chang he unfolds his scheme for setting all the European Powers against Great Britain. After the slaughter China will step in and conquer the remnants of the armies. The *Halcyon* is sent to Malta convoyed by the *Majestic*. In the Bay of Biscay *La Gloire*, a French battleship, is encountered, and fights the *Majestic*, which ultimately rams her opponent and then sinks. The crew is saved by the *Halcyon*.

Great Britain now prepares for war. A picket boat in the Channel sights a foreign fleet convoying transports, and John Hardy, a consumptive midshipman home on sick leave, brings the news to Portsmouth. Immediately troops are concentrated at Brighton under the command of Sir Evelyn Wood, and the Channel fleet sails from Spithead to meet the foe. John Hardy gets on board the *Jupiter*, and, solely by his strength of purpose, is permitted to remain. The British fleet meets the Allied ships in Mid-channel and a battle ensues. Although the British vessels are outnumbered by two to one, the superior tactics of the British, and of John Hardy (who escapes on the *Jupiter* from the fight, and rams all the transports some distance away), results in the destruction of the Allied fleet.

CHAPTER IX.

John Hardy Gives an Order.

John Hardy in a dead faint on Brighton sands—John Hardy waking next morning on a down bed in Cavendish Square—the transition is rapid, but that is what, in fact, occurred.

Captain MacLeod, though gashed all over the chest, woke to consciousness hours before John. John had his wound *inside* his chest in the shape of phthisis, and gave frequent signs of it in the form of those pathetic clandestine coughs which came from him. The swim through the water had nearly done for John; and he woke next morning with a chest contracted and wheezing with asthma. Besides this, he had a scratch on his brow where a shell-splinter had cut him.

No. 11a Cavendish Square had been the town-residence of John Hardy's race for some generations, and here, in solitary state, the young man lived when in London.

London, lately, had seen a good deal of him, though formerly he had always buried himself in the country when, as rarely happened, he was on shore. This newly-developed attractiveness of London was concentrated for John in a certain mansion in Park Lane.

When he opened his eyes, torn by a cough, they met two others bending low over him—old ones, surrounded by wrinkles; anxious ones, full of solicitude. It was half-past eleven o'clock.

"Well, Bobbie," said John with a smile, and stretched a little.

"I am pleased to see you so much yourself, I am sure, Master John," said Bobbie; "how are you feeling now?"

"I, Bobs? Much the same as usual, I suppose. Where on earth am I?"

"You are in Cavendish Square, sir—in your own chamber."

"Oh, aye—I see that. I remember now, Bobbie. The battle, eh? and the swim, eh? The old *Jupiter* did not do so badly, after all. Did any of the enemy escape? And Captain MacLeod—how is he, Bobbie?"

"He is said to be doing fairly well, Master John. He has a wound in his chest, which is not serious. He is better off than you, I am thinking. It was he who brought you here, sir."

"When?"

"About four in the morning, sir."

"Ah, I fancy I recollect something of it. Well, that's all right then, Bobbie."

"Ah, Master John, not all right, perhaps! When, when, sir, will you learn to take care of that chest, sir?"

"Oh, bother the chest, Bobs boy. A fellow has got to do his duty, I suppose, Bobbie?"

John Hardy's eyelids lifted as he said this, and he turned upward the pure cerulean azure of his eyes in clear open query upon old "Bobbie," the aged butler of his father and grandfather.

"Well, sir—well—if you put it in that way, of course. But still, there is this to be said: it was not, so to speak, your *duty* to go through this; you had not, as one might say, any right to be there——"

"No, Bobbie, but I *was* there, you see. And being there, it was only natural that one should do what little one could for the old country, don't you think——?"

"What *little*, sir?" cried Bobbie. "Ah, that is like your way of speaking, sir—like your father before you, Master John! This is a proud day for poor old Bobbie, Master John—forgive me for these tears, sir, the tears come quickly when we are old, Master John—a proud day, and the tip-top hour in the life of your father's old servant, Master

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John, making dying easy to him from this day onwards, sir. It was what I predicted of you, and to-day you have made true your old Bobbie's word before all the world, Master John. England this morning is ringing, sir, with the name of Hardy, aye, and France, too, sir, and Europe and America, and the servants down at the Hall have sent a telegram to poor old Bobbie, sir, all of them in a body, congratulating me on the man you have shown yourself, and it's a proud day, sir—a proud day—for poor old Robert Mason, Master John, is this that you have brought me—— "

Robert's flow of words was choked by sobs. John put out his hand, drew him nearer to the bedside, and laid one arm round the stringy old neck, the boy's soft, affectionate nature overflowing with murmured words of tenderness.

"I am so glad, Bobbie, if I have made you happy," he whispered. "You know I would do anything to do that, wouldn't I? But what is it all about, Bobs? Have I done anything very extraordinary, then? England was bound to beat those mounseer people, anyway, wasn't she?"

Bobbie disengaged himself hurriedly. He had his proofs with him—chapter and verse. He had been poring all the morning over a couple of score of newspapers, weeping over them as he only wept over his old Bible. He had brought them with him. He flaunted them in the face of John.

"Read *those*, if you want to know what you have done! Well, it's a proud day—a proud day—for poor old Bobbie, that's all I can say——," he cried, in a weak, broken voice, treading woebegone about the chamber, with his face in his hands once more.

John glanced through three or four of the papers, half sitting up in bed, while Bobbie held ever and again to his lips a large glass of warm egg and milk, for which the old butler had rung.

"Well, Bobbie," said John with a smile.

The *Times* concluded a lengthy article by saying: "Assuming that the account to hand of the battle, derived chiefly from the statement of Captain MacLeod, be correct in all its details, what words of eulogy shall we find in our English tongue to extol and glorify the very young man to whom Britain this day owes her immunity from the shame of an evading foot? In the times of ancient Rome, the people would have been accutely conscious of their inability to invent any Dignity equal to their sense of obligation to such a deliverer. This young man would have been proclaimed Saviour of his Country, and would have been intrusted with the supreme direction of affairs—naval, military, political—with the injunction to see to it *ne respublica damnum capiat*. How will England adjust herself to this new-found personality, of genius so commanding, in her midst? We wait with keen curiosity—and, we may add, with some anxiety—to see what shall be done by the Government to the man whom the nation delighteth to honour."

The *Daily Chronicle* lost itself in poetic allusion and far-fetched metaphor on the subject of John Hardy. It said: "What Nelson was to the ship of wood and sails, that, it is already clear, is this young man to the ship of steel and steam. That is to say, he is its genius. He is more still—he is its embodiment. Ralph Waldo Emmerson, in one of his essays, points out that occasionally a man is born who is himself, as it were, the Thing in connection with which his activities are employed; thus, Nasmyth was concentrated Iron, Stephenson was embodied Steel, Edison is himself Electricity, Rudyard was himself a Lighthouse. We may add—John Hardy is himself a modern Battleship."

But it was reserved for the *Daily Telegraph* to embody in its florid and ornamental style something of that shudder of delight with which England, through all her breadth, learnt, with that morning's sunrise, that she had still a son with a voice loud and hoarse enough to proclaim once more to all the earth her empire of the Sea. No style could have been too florid to express that day the feelings of the nation; for emotion is, in its very nature, florid; and England was in the grip of an emotion.

The *Telegraph* said: "No one has ever yet accused this journal of an undue tendency to hero-worship; and in speaking as we have spoken of Sub-Lieutenant John Hardy—whom, we confess, we have for the first time in our life heard of half-an-hour ago—it is partly the man whom we laud, but above all, it is the great nation that could have produced him. We have at command some special information about Mr. John Hardy; we know something of the family of sailors of which he is the latest, and greatest, product; and we say with the certainty of knowledge that he is as essentially an English thing as the Cliffs of Dover, or the smuts of the Black Country. No other country in the universe could have given birth to anything at all resembling him. He is doubly the child of England; for he is the child of the sea also. The sea is part of England. The oceans are not her boundary—they are her continuation. If one were to ask Mr. Hardy: 'What is the breadth of England?' he would probably reply: 'Her breadth is the distance between the Poles.' Such, at least, is the account we have received on good authority of the temperament of this latest scion of an old Hampshire family of thoroughgoing 'sea-dogs.'

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"For the rest, the young gentleman is said to have an ailment of the chest; he has the typical blue eyes of the English tar, and very light wavy hair, which he wears rather long. He is small in stature, and slim. His face is said to be the gravest, saddest, prettiest girl-face in the land; and his disposition in private life is much more than usually mild, yielding, and affectionate. Our informant hints at a supposed weakness for the fair sex, and confesses that at the examination stage of his career, the man who bids fair to become the new national hero proved himself far from brilliant.

"So much we have been able to gather; and this significant fact also: that from his earliest boyhood, Hardy has seemed to all who have known him to be deficient in one of the ordinary instincts of humanity—the instinct of Fear. Nothing, so far, has appeared to have had any tendency toward alarming him; to use our informant's words: 'He would remain cool if the earth were bursting to pieces.' Such is the man who has ranged himself on the side of England, and against the Allied nations of the Continent.

"This is no time of ordinary routines and gradual processes. The moment is ecstatic—the hour is immense with Fate. Let the nation for the nonce fling to the winds its old Shibboleths of Use and Wont, and now—without delay—proceed to garland with its fairest laurels the head which has been its salvation. It is certain that, but for John Hardy, we, writing here, should now have been writing with a boom of hostile cannon in our ears. What guerdon is high enough for the man who has averted such a doom? Fleet-Captain — Vice-Admiral — Admiral — these are the honorary titles that occur to us at the moment, as in no way commensurate with the reward which England owes, and will insist upon paying, to her deliverer.

"Nay, we know little of the English people, if it do not straightway find something so akin to its own secret temper, something so precisely like its own inner self, in John Hardy, and in the cool rashness of John Hardy, and in his contemptuous way, and in his audacious gallantry, and in his homely, Cromwellian grandeur of mind—that a burst of enthusiasm from the entire nation shall at once proclaim him its chosen and darling. England, as Mr. Mathew Arnold has said, is a Nation 'in the grand style'; John Hardy, we do not hesitate to say, is a Man 'in the grand style.' It will not be surprising if these two, having once come across each other, shall, without delay, strike up a friendship perhaps unparalleled in history. The beginning of such a friendship we to-day announce."

So the *Telegraph*. The *Standard*, on the other hand, came out with a long essay on Blood, showing how Blood, and Blood alone, had all through been the making of England. "A democracy without an aristocracy," it said, "is like an egg without salt, and is on the road to rottenness and ruin. It was necessary for Sub-Lieutenant Hardy, before he could annihilate the allied navies of Europe, to have behind him a long line of ancestors whose home was the sea. He stands high—but on a pedestal which is not himself. He is the apex of a pyramid, and the rest of the pyramid consists of centuries of the ocean-life and ocean-culture of a race. It is Blood that tells."

The *Clarionet*, on the contrary, a Socialist organ, insisted upon it that the success of this sub pointed to the necessity of the abolition of all distinctions of rank and class in the Army and Navy, where all should command in turn; while the stiff and stark *Morning Post* was the only organ bold enough to suggest that, while recognising the unbounded value of John Hardy's services, the country should insist upon the paramount importance of law and order, and see to it that, if only formally, the young lieutenant should be court-martialed for his breach of naval discipline. But the *Westminster Gazette*, a couple of hours later, came out with a brilliant cartoon, lampooning the *Post's* idea, with the representation of a court-martial sitting over a blue-jacket for sneezing during cutlass drill on one of Her Majesty's ships; while the *Evening News* covered itself with fame by saying: "By the Goddess of *Victory*, Nelson has slain his thousands; but by *Jupiter*, Hardy has slain his tens of thousands!"

There was hardly a journal in the country which did not join in this chorus of acclammation which rose to greet John Hardy as he woke from sleep on the morning of the 17th of March. He was the only person in England who saw his praises with anything like equanimity.

He glanced through three of the articles, then pushed the whole heap of papers from him.

"Well, Bobbie," he said, "it is nice to see one's name all about in the prints. But what is it all for?"

"There is the opinion of England," said old Robert proudly, "about a son of John Nelson Hardy, sir!"

"Of England, Bobs?" said John; "don't you believe that. These writing fellows are not England. England is silent—great and silent. She means more, Bobs, and says less. She will love me, too, for what I have done, perhaps—but different to this talk—in her own silent way——"

He stopped, coughing.

"Ah, that cough, Master John!" said Robert.

"Bother the cough! it is rather bad this morning though, isn't it? Do you know what I think I shall do, Bobbie?"

"Well, sir?"

"Go to a hot country at once."

"A hot—what, sir?"

"A hot country, Bobs."

Bobs was alarmed. He at once suspected diplomacy—that the cough was being made to serve as an excuse. Master John was whimsical, and wilful. Bobs knew what it meant when those dry rose-lips closed tightly together.

"Which country, Master John?" said the old man tremulously.

He feared horribly that the bird was about to fly from the old cage.

"Which country, sir?" he repeated, before John answered.

"I am thinking of China, Bobbie," said John.

The old man's hands went up, meeting in terror.

"China, Master John? Oh, don't, don't say China, Master John!"

"I believe that China is a hot country—in the summer, Bobbie?" said John with an intonation of innocent query.

"I know nothing about China, Master John. Certainly, it is no fit place for such as you."

"Oh, I don't see that, Bobbie."

"But why China, Master John, if you really think of going anywhere? China, recollect, is at the other end of the world."

"But that's where my ship is, isn't it, Bobbie?"

"Your ship? What, ships *again*?—and you coughing there like an echo among the Chiltern Hills? Well, well, I suppose it's no use an old man talking, who has served your father before you, and your grandfather before him."

"Yes it is, Bobbie; believe me, it is, Bobs! But still—really—you will try and be good, won't you? I must go, Bobbie."

"Well, that sea!" said Bobbie, with a hand over his mouth, shaking the head of contemplative wonderment. He was thinking of that "sea-fever" which, in the history of the house of Hardy, had more than once resulted in domestic tragedy and disaster.

"Well, that sea!" he said—"those ships!"

"No, it isn't quite that, Bobbie; it isn't the sea," said John. "Don't go blaming the sea. Of course, one is fond of the sea, and all that; but that isn't quite the reason now. I feel that I must go, and I must really."

"Well, but isn't that what I said, Master John?—that it is no use an old man talking? That no one pays any heed to him; no one whom he has watched over, and yearned his heart over, more than any son? Ah——" suddenly the old man fell half over the bed, imploring with tears. "Listen

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to me, Master Johnnie, do, now—give up these wild thoughts! What good can come of them? So, from a boy, it always was—and did old Bobbie ever lead you wrong? Do, now, don't think of such things—it is the Enemy puts them in your head—drive them away! Here is all England going to make much of you—why not stay with old Bobbie? Don't go, my son! Don't you go! You

Bobs shuffled off.

are not in a fit state, and it is no fit place, among a pack of heathen men, fighting fiends—what good can you do? Stay here with me! Can you suppose that I would tell you wrong? Come, now, comfort old Bobbie's heart—tell me——"

John Hardy rubbed his pink face against the old man's shrivelled cheek.

"It is so hard to say no to you, Bobbie," he said. "I hardly think it is right of you to urge me in that way. You see, I have made up my mind, and it is hardly—kind, is it? If one's mind is made up in a certain way, it is beyond one's power to change it, is it not? Go I must, you see."

The dry rose leaves were pressed very close together now, and Bobbie should have noticed them; but he went rashly on.

"Only listen to me, Master John," he said. "Hear me out——"

"No—no more," said John. "I bid you be silent now. Pass on a sheet of note-paper and a pencil."

Old Bobbie, mouse-quiet in a moment, hobbled to a desk, and then back with the required materials for writing.

John scribbled a few words, handed them to the old man, and said:

"It is all right, Bobbie. I am not the least cross, you know. But there are times when one must be allowed to go one's own way, aren't there? Have that telegram sent off at once, will you? And bring in a good big tumbler of champagne, will you, Bobs?"

The telegram with which Bobs shuffled off contained these words:

To Selby, Captain of *English Bird*, lying at Freshwater.
Please have *English Bird* ready to sail by Sunday night, at latest. Going coast Spain.

John Hardy.

The *English Bird* was a 74-ton schooner-yacht of John Hardy's own, with an easy speed of twelve knots.

CHAPTER X.

John Hardy Among Women.

John Hardy had a love-trouble. He was extremely "non-intellectual," and his passion had fastened upon a person all intellect.

Had his entry into the Royal Navy depended upon his passing the usual competitive examination as a competitor, he would certainly never have entered it. As it was, he was a "service cadet," and had received a nomination as the son of an officer of the navy who had performed long and distinguished service. Even so, he had had to pass a test examination; and in this very elementary ordeal he had failed in the subject, "French." Once more he received a nomination, and once more he was given a chance in the examination hall of the Commissioners of Cannon Row—his very last. During all that half year he was "swotting" like an elephant at the fatal "French," to the hopeless neglect of "Scripture," which was another of his weak points. During the hot week in June preceding the examination, he was a true slave of the lamp; but his strong Will this time was at work. With his lucky knack, he scraped through. The lowest number of marks which could "pass" him was 660: he got 662.

John Hardy was not a book-man; he had even a secret profound contempt for book-men, and book-learning.

Moreover, as we said before, he got into more trouble later on. While in training on board the *Britannia* he had been reported to the Admiralty for "unsatisfactory conduct," and had been "warned." The "unsatisfactory conduct" consisted in walking arm-in-arm with a girl of the lowest class through the streets of Dartmouth, both the girl and John being pretty far gone in a state of intoxication.

These, then, were his weak points: That he was far from literary; that he was too fond of drink; that he was too fond of feminine persons.

Up to the time at which we meet him, he still made spelling mistakes in common English words in writing ordinary letters to his friends.

In five or six of the ports of Europe there were more than one young woman who were thinking with regret and longing of the crinkled hair and angel-eyes of John Hardy. He was painfully shy in the presence of women, and he was a very clumsy and heavy lover—but he was also very beautiful and *naïf*: and one thing made up for the other. On the whole, he "arrived."

He loved every woman in the world; and this love was, in general, returned.

But most of all he loved Bosey Jay; and Bosey, apparently, did not love him. Her love was already taken up by something else—something which she called "Art."

Poor John Hardy had no sort of conception what "Art" was all about. He could admire the sleekness of a 111-ton gun, and give an unerring opinion on the sheer of a ship's beam; but between all that and "Art" there is a biggish interval.

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Both the girl and John being pretty far gone in a state of intoxication.

He went to see her on the afternoon of the day on which he sent the telegram to Freshwater. A narrow strip of black plaster concealed the scratch on his forehead. He was in the habit, even on visits of ceremony, of wearing a rather rough and heavy pea-jacket, such as pilots wear, with brass buttons, and thus attired, he went out into the streets, a soft felt hat on his head.

Could he have been recognised, he would have been lifted high on the shoulders of the people, and carried to his destination.

A servant ushered him into a very dainty inner room at Park Lane—a kind of luxurious studio-boudoir, in a rather Greek style, with Corinthian pillows, and flimsy saffron hangings. Bosey was an heiress, and lived in a stately solitude. There now she sat before an easel, with brush and mahl stick and palette.

She was a lady of many accomplishments. She sang like a bird; she had written two novels of the "problem" kind; she was a sociologist; she had painted one knows not how many pictures; she was not yet nineteen; and she was rather pretty.

Bosey had a fairly substantial body, with a waist that struck one as being quite as large as that of Eve or Venus. She wore her red-gold hair in coil upon coil of *négligé* richness about her head; her eyes were a bright green.

In her large countenance, and the curves of her full lips, there was quick intelligence, and strong self-assurance. The hard bones of her corsets were not more visible through her bodice than the iron which underlay her character, as evidenced in her face.

"Oh, Mr. Hardy, I am glad!" she cried, springing up vivaciously as John entered the studio. "Ah, and I have heard! I have heard!"

"About the battle, and all that?"

"What else, if 'all that' means Mr. John Hardy? Do sit down. How very brave you must be!"

"All Englishmen are brave."

"Are they? A good many of them are detestable cowards, to *my* certain knowledge. Men do so live in regions of fantasy! Women are more prosaic—and clearer. Did you ever see an average English girl in the sovereign presence of a mouse, Mr. Hardy?"

"Girls are different," said John.

Bosey's lips tightened with pressure. This was precisely the kind of ancient point of view, purely male, to which she had the most touchy antipathy. John was hopelessly "old," she actively "new."

"Oh, different, of course," she said, "in pose of nervous structure, and so on, and so on. But is it not rather cheap to say it? And substitute for the mouse the broker's man, and you get at once a measure of the average Englishman's courage."

"Somebody has been telling you wrong," said John. "All Englishmen are brave. Only foreign people are afraid of things."

She looked at him in absolute pity, for his narrowness, his insularism, his unintelligence.

"But why *telling* me, Mr. Hardy? Did you say *telling* me? Can it be that you still think an ordinary educated girl incapable of observing for herself? You have still quite the harem idea I see."

"I? Oh, now you are not kind. Why, if you only knew how much I like girls!"

"*Merci!* That is *so*—condescendingly good of you."

"Ah, now you are sarcastic."

"Ha! ha! You are *too* shrewd, you know."

"I never know whether you are making fun of me, or not."

"Well, what does it matter, Mr. John?" she said, softening. "It could be of no consequence, one way or the other."

"But it is not nice to be made fun of by some one whom you like."

"Really *like*?"

"You know."

"You are too complimentary."

"Like isn't the word. I think I like you better than anyone in the whole world."

"Now you are spooney—deliberately so."

"I should be as happy as the Queen, if you would only like me back."

"Spooney! Spooney!"

"You are not making fun?"

"Don't be so suspicious. You are too penetrating."

"Well, what do you say?"

"To what?"

"To my liking you so much?"

"I say that it is distinctly and malignantly spooney."

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"But do you like me back?"

"Oh, *I!* Well, yes, as you ask me. I like you—back. But in my own fashion, you understand; not in that wickedly and designingly spooney way."

"I do not understand you," said John. "You are not like other girls."

"Then logically you should not like me, since you like other girls so very, very much."

"I do, though. I like you much better than any of the others. You must not go by Logic."

"Ah, but I am nothing, if not logical, Mr. Hardy."

"But facts are facts, aren't they? If logic contradicts a Fact, then you must throw the logic overboard to the sharks. I tell you I like you better than anyone. That is enough."

"Enough for what?—for me?"

"It should be."

"Really? But our human nature is more or less complex, I suppose? Do you mean that the mere fact of your caring for me should be enough to lead me to corresponding actions? That is absurd, you know. I take it that you are a great advocate of the 'free-born Briton' principle, and all that, aren't you? Well, I am, too. Listen, Mr. Hardy: we first met, how long ago?—about five weeks, I think—at Lady Sinclair's, you remember. And since then, how many times?—about six, perhaps. Well, I can see that you are used to easy conquests, you know; and at once I detected that you were laying yourself out to be captured by me, if I chose to take the trouble to capture you. But I did not choose! I have other things—quite other things—to think of, and it will be as much as I can possibly do, supposing I live for eighty years in tolerable health of body, to get through the little all I have in mind. I am not going to say that it is out of the question that some day I may not allow myself to be seduced into marriage by some man or other, but, at the moment, it is a thing as wildly remote from the actual current of my thoughts, that, I assure you, it has quite the look of an impossibility. All the time, mind you, I am vividly alive to the fact that it is very nice to be petted and kissed by charming lips; but it is not, you see, precisely what I have chosen for myself. You know about 'scorning delights and living laborious days,' don't you? Well, that is my way. So I beg, once and for all, that you will be more sensible with respect to me for the future, Mr. John."

As the last words passed her lips, a long sigh escaped from John Hardy, and this sentence, barely whispered, came from him:

"*You* are the girl for me, by the Lord!"

She heard him, and cried:

"Mr. Hardy!"

At that moment he had first definitely resolved to marry her. His lips were pressed together.

"I am going to China in a day or two," he said. "I should very much like to marry you before I go."

She broke into ripples of evil laughter.

"Not so soon! Not so soon!" she cried.

"When I come back," he said simply.

She looked into his face in unfeigned surprise.

"Have I not *told* you?" she cried, almost with alarm. "What do you mean? I am a free subject, you know. This is not Turkey; this is not—Peru. Do you mean that because you are to be the national hero, and all that . . .? Oh, but that is in rather bad taste, then!"

"I love you!"

"I don't care!"

"I *do!*"

"You do not!"

"I shall have you yet!"

"*Have* me? What do you mean?"

"I shall have you."

"Silly. *Go* away! This is *too* absurd!"

She stamped. The dry rose-leaves had brushed her cheek

"Oh, Mr. Hardy, I am so glad."

So far had passion led John Hardy. Then he started backward—to this point he had never dared before, on his own initiative. A shock of shyness gripped him; he blushed a vivid scarlet.

"Ah, now I have presumed," he said, stammering. "Forgive me—I will go——"

"Well, it is of no consequence, Mr. Hardy," she answered, "but perhaps you had better go."

"Well then— But you understand that I am going to China?"

"Perfectly. You are lucky. I should like to go there also. The Chinese are quite charming artists."

"While I am away you will not be marrying anyone else?"

"Not I. You may be confident that I shall remain ab-so-lute-ly self-sufficient. Even the new National Darling, you see, cannot tempt me."

"Good-bye. I am going."

"Then go."

"When I come back from China, I shall have you."

"Well, we won't argue the point now. I am awfully sorry for you, you know, because you *look* cut up. But you will soon get over it, and it will do you good. You were over confident, you know. Will you say good-bye, now?"

"May I kiss your hand?"

"Yes, if that is any comfort to you."

He kissed her hand with an old-fashioned reverent grace; caught up his hat from the top of a cabinet, and was gone.

(To be continued.)

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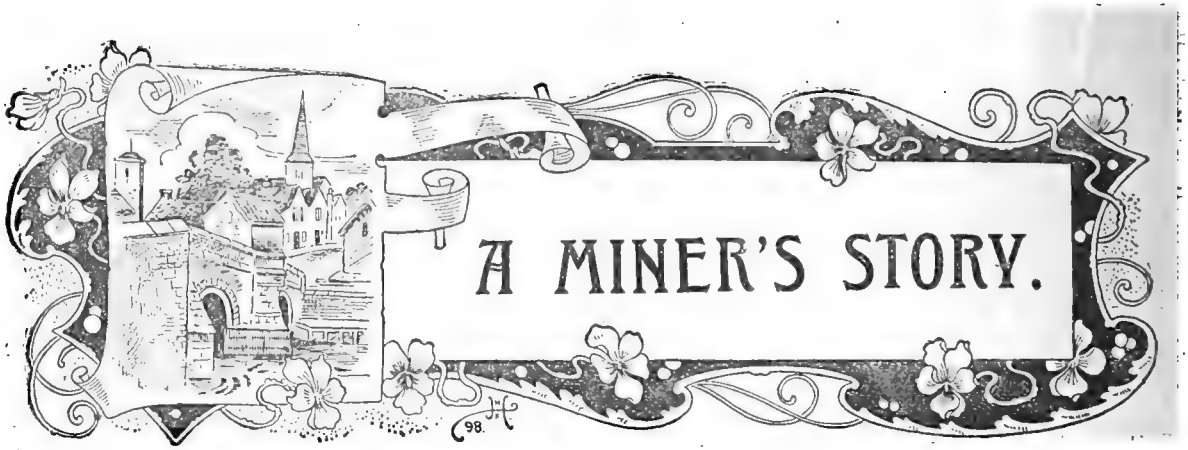

A MINER'S STORY.

There were only three in our party. Tom and I had come to Coolgardie together, being old mates, and we came across Bill. He was a queer chap always, but he would work all day like a horse. Why, he seemed as if he worked of nights after he's turned in, did Bill.

When Tom and I first came across him, Bill was down on his luck. This Tusker had just about panned out, and he hadn't got a shilling left to buy water, which, seeing how water was £1 a bucket at Coolgardie just then, was awkward. Yes, we were a godsend to Bill, that's about what we were, Tom and I, when we offered to take him in mates. Not but what it was right enough for us, too. Tom and I had a matter of maybe £30 between us, and we were pretty old hands at the job, but the place was new to us, and Coolgardie, like most fields, had ways of its own. Now, Bill, he'd been here two months, and he knew all there was to know about the place, and so it came about as we went mates with Bill, and just then Bill was mighty glad to be took by anybody as could get a bit of tucker and a bucket of water.

One thing was sure, Bill hadn't always been a digger; he hadn't been at it very long, that was clear.

We stopped at Coolgardie for a month, and it was long enough, too. Gold there was, but it wanted finding, and we didn't find it.

We were getting pretty near tired of it; especially Bill. One day there came news that gold had been struck heavy to the north-west, a matter of twenty miles off or so. Bill was wild to be off, and though we heard that there was no water found yet it stood to reason that somebody would find it, and, anyhow, water carts were sure to go where there was gold. The new field was out beyond the red-sunset range, and we concluded to see what it was like.

When we reached the place we camped in a likely-looking spot all by ourselves. Tom called it Dry-grass Gully, because it was one sheet of some short grass as yellow as gold. There was no time to lose, for, do your best, you had to drink more water than another party to be seen from the ridge of our gully. It looked like a race between luck and thirst, and the thirst was sure while the luck was doubtful. I can't say I liked the look of things, no more did Tom, but Bill was just wild.

Anyhow, we had come and we were bound to give it a trial. For three days we worked in that gully early and late, and every hour the water got lower, and we grew more and more thirsty. Thirst! Never in all my life had I known what it meant before—our throats burnt and ached, our eyes sank in our heads, our hands began to tremble, and, work as hard as we might, our skin got drier and hotter. We had found gold. It was no use trying to dig for it, but we had hunted about over a good part of the gully and there was gold everywhere. But what was the good? That night when we knocked off there was only about a quart and a half of water left in the keg. I looked at Tom and Tom looked at me, and I could see that it was settled.

"It's all up, mate," said Tom, "and a pity, too, for there's gold here, and no mistake."

I looked at Bill, but he said nothing.

"Yes, Tom," I replied, "it's all we'll do to get back on the water that is left, unless we have the luck to fall in with some."

Bill looked from one of us to the other, and at last he broke out:

"Going back, are you? Going back, when here's gold to make us rich, waiting for us?"

"It'll have to wait, then, mate," said Tom. "Gold's good, but it ain't quite good enough."

Bill looked from Tom to me, and his eyes shone in the dusk of the tent.

"You mean it, do you?" he said, in a sort of hoarse whisper.

"Mean it? I should say so, mate!" said Tom, his throat too dry to allow him to say much more.

Bill looked round, first at one and then at the other of us, and then without a word he got up and flung himself out of the tent. I saw him marching down the gully throwing his arms above his head in the moonlight, for it was full moon that night.

"Bill's cranky, Tom," said I.

"Looks like it, mate. Well, he'll come to his bearings by morning."

With that Tom coiled himself on his blanket and went to sleep, and after a minute or two I did the same. It was daylight when I awoke and looked round. There was Tom lying where he dropped overnight, but I saw nothing of Bill.

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"Hullo," I tried to say, but I couldn't say it rightly, my throat was so dry. "Bill isn't here, Tom," said I.

"No, more he ain't," answered Tom, sitting up; "the more water for you and me, mate."

We scrambled out from under the tent. The sun was just up, but there wasn't a sign of Bill, look where we would.

"The dickens," said Tom suddenly, looking hard at the tent. "He's been here, sure enough, and left this note. Dick, you're a scollard, wot's this wrote on the tent?"

Sure enough, on the flap of the tent, was written, with something that looked like chalk:

"You want to go back to Coolgardie—you can go. I've found what I came for, and it's mine now. Good-bye, Bill."

"He's mad, Tom," said I at last, "and he's gone without a drain of water, poor beggar."

"Mad or not, I expect he's come across a nugget, and he means to keep it. Not if I knows it, mate, not by chalks. Fair dealings atween mates is wot I says."

It was never much good arguing with Tom. He was bent on getting hold of Bill and sharing the nugget. At last I gave in, and we risked it and started. It was easy to see the way Bill had gone, for there were his marks on the soft ground and sand, not clear, but as like as not the first steps that had ever been there since it was first made. "He couldn't have gone far," Tom said, and we took the drop of water that was left and started.

I won't tell you how we struggled on hour after hour, and how we suffered from the heat of the sun and from thirst. But at last the sun went down behind a hill.

Suddenly I found myself in a blinding glare of sunlight once more, and then I knew, though I couldn't see, that I had at last reached the top of a hill. I put my trembling hand over my eyes, and little by little I began to see. At first it was gold, gold, only a great sea of shining, dazzling gold—then it began to grow clear and I saw—oh, heavens, what was it I saw? Water! Yes, glittering, flashing, blazing, it was water! Tom was behind me now, and I tried to shout; but I could only point and wave my arms like a madman.

In another minute Tom had come up. He was, like me, nearly dead, and staggered like a drunkard; but he got there somehow.

But where was Bill? I looked and Tom looked. There was the golden grass, and the low bushes, and the water that flashed and quivered in the low bottom, where the sunlight made a yellow haze round the trees that stood here and there with drooping boughs along the course of the creek; but not a living creature in sight—not a sign of the mate we had risked so much to find.

We stood for a minute, and then Tom whispered hoarsely:

"Look here, mate, wot's the odds about Bill? Here's water, which is better than nuggets."

We staggered rather than walked down the slope with the level sun shining in our faces. We dragged one heavy foot after the other. Doggedly, slowly, feebly, we did it; but somehow we did do it.

Tom had got a few yards ahead, and of a sudden he stopped. As I came up he pointed to one side and whispered:

"Look, mate, Bill's there!"

He was. Parched as we were, we couldn't pass him. The gush and the whisper of the water was in our ears; but we couldn't pass Bill. Could he hear it, too? We crept over to where he lay. He was half sitting, half lying against a boulder, and he was looking the other way, so that we couldn't see his face, but Tom had been right. A big, rough, shapeless lump of almost pure gold was lying on the sand before him—his hands lay beside it on the ground—his fingers somehow looked as if they had been stroking it.

"Bill!" I said as loud as I could. "Bill!"

He never turned his head—he never moved. I went closer—I looked in his face—then I knew. Bill was dead. His hollow eyes stared out straight before him; his head was bent a little forward as if he were listening. With the sound of the water in his ears, with his nugget on the ground at his side—Bill was dead.

We looked at him, but we said nothing. Then we staggered down to the creek—it wasn't fifty yards off from where he lay. There we drank and drank again. Then we let the water run over our hands and dipped our dry faces in the stream. At last we went back to Bill.

We stood and looked at him, Tom and I.

"What's that in his other hand, mate?" Tom said in a whisper.

It was a letter, worn and brown, and frayed along the edge.

"Let's bury it with him, Tom," I said.

"Not us, mate. Fair dealings between mates—that's what I say—maybe it'll tell who it belongs to—read it, mate; it can't hurt no one now."

I read the letter as well as I could. No need to say what it said, but when I had read it both Tom and I looked in Bill's dead face, and then we understood. It wasn't a new story—I had heard it often before—a story of a young, delicate wife and her little children brought to want and disgrace by a thoughtless husband and father, and yet seeming to love him all the more. No wonder Bill was mad to get gold—no wonder he looked anxious and eager.

"What's the address?" Tom asked me, after a bit.

I told him what was on the letter. Tom stooped and lifted the big nugget in both hands.

"Right, mate," he said. "There's enough here to give them a start."

Not another word was said. So Tom gave up his share; so Bill got his nugget after all.

A. H. Parsons.

Result of "Empress" Competition.

A copy of "The Final War" has been forwarded to each of the following competitors, who discovered the greatest number of discrepancies between the text and illustrations in the first instalment of "The Empress of the Earth":

T. E. Gooden, 19 Bark Street, Bolton.
T. W. Rose, 103 Derby Road, Southampton.
G. Batty, 13 Regent Road, Morecambe.
J. E. Sorrel, 196 Lakedale Road, Plumstead.
L. W. Judd, 2 Alfred Villas, Stanton Road, Barnes.
J. Murphy, 36 Clorliffe Road, Dublin.
R. Phipps, 16 Hall Street, Sale, Cheshire.
J. Ferguson, 7 Tullock's Buildings, Inverness.
G. H. Perceval, 17 Warminster Road, South Norwood.
W. Gyde, The Barracks, Warley, Essex.

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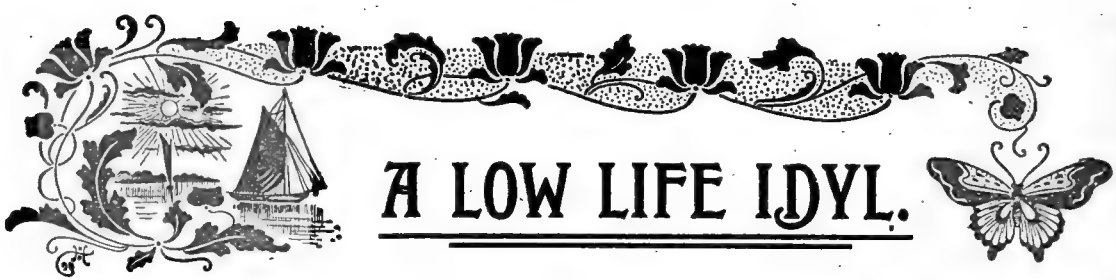

A LOW LIFE IDYL.

Among the dingy and humble streets of the eastern part of a huge, cruel metropolis, a little boy had dwelt for seven years, in the shabbiest street of them all, and had scarcely known a single day when he could move his tiny and wasted body without pangs of the sharpest pain.

He had only his mother for a companion, though often the neighbours were kind, and would come in and sit beside him and say cheering words—women and little girls would chiefly, and sometimes, of an evening men. Boys rarely came, and when they did appear they always had a shy and constrained manner as though their parents had forced them to see the presence of the little sufferer.

Often his mother would be compelled to spend hours away from him, which were passed in solitude, for his mother was very poor and had to go and seek what work she could get; the neighbours were all very poor as well, and sometimes were forced to leave babies in their cradles with only a child, not as old as Willie himself, to watch them.

But while the slow years dragged along, Willie had grown to find a great consolation during these periods of loneliness. Once very long ago, as it now seemed to him, his mother had said, when he was peevish and fretful because of his incessant pain:

"Suppose you can't get up and walk about, and play like other children! There's little Lottie Lynn, just over the way, who's the same age you are, and hasn't spoken a single word. She's deaf and dumb. Now oughtn't you to be thankful that God didn't make you deaf and dumb?"

Willie reflected for a while. Then he said: "Yes; I ought to be thankful, mother." After more musing, he added: "Can't she say a *single* word?"

"No, not one, Willie. Just think of it! She was born so."

"Wouldn't they let her come over here and see me?" asked Willie, after another pause.

"I'm afraid not," replied Mrs. Gray, pursing her lips rather grimly. "Her mother's a proud sort. She's 'shamed she's got a dumb child, I believe. But there the child is, Willie, over the way! Now you rec'lect about her, and just bless your lucky stars you ain't afflicted like poor Lottie Lynn!"

Willie kept pondering day by day, and week by week, on the wretched fate of the child so near him. It must be so dreadful not to have the power of speech. Many a forlorn moment was soothed for him by the thought that he could tell his mother just where the pain was, and have her give him what help she could.

"Does Lottie Lynn ever feel as ill as I do?" he once asked; and the question startled his mother into a merciful falsehood.

"Oh, yes, Willie, she's very ill sometimes."

"And she can't talk about it," murmured Willie. "She can't tell them how to help her, like I can. That must be very bad, mother, mustn't it?"

"Oh, terrible bad—terrible!" And Mrs. Gray's kiss touched her boy's wan cheek. "Now just *think* how grateful *you* should be!"

"Yes, yes!" said Willie. And soon afterwards, during a surcease of distress, he fell asleep with "poor Lottie Lynn" on his lips.

Later he said to his mother: "Lottie Lynn ain't always ill is she?"

"N—no; not always."

"Oh, then, I do wish they would let her come over and see me on one of her well days! Won't you ask 'em? Won't you?"

The idea of meeting Lottie Lynn preyed, through some strange sympathy of misery, upon Willie's mind. "Poor little thing," he would keep saying to himself over and over again, with a compassion pathetically droll, "poor little thing!"

"I declare I'll just go and ask them Lynns if they *won't* let the child come over here an' set by my boy," Mrs. Gray at length decided.

But her project failed. Mrs. Lynn was a small, fragile woman, who never left her rooms except when forced to leave them. She worked monotonously all day at a sewing-machine, and her young daughters, of whom there were three or four with slight difference between their ages, did all her errands. But Lottie, the little dumb girl, hardly ever left her side.

"Oh, no, Mrs. Gray!" she said, in answer to the request of Willie's mother. "I can't spare Lottie—I really can't!"

And her thin, bluish lips tightened as she looked down at the half-finished garment which lay limp and white below the perpendicular sewing-machine needle, with its steely glitter.

"Very well; just as you say," sniffed her visitor.

She thought her neighbour's reluctance meant pride, but it meant only shame. She hated to have her dumb Lottie go abroad. She dreaded those heedless and cynical comments which might be passed upon the afflicted child. She made more money than Mrs. Gray did, and in a general way got on better with her family of fatherless little girls. It was, doubtless, cruel and ill-judged of Willie's mother to define her motive so harshly. But Mrs. Gray passed from her presence with an angry and gloomy discontent.

For many months afterwards Willie lay in his bed, bearing the burden of his weakness and his intense fits of bodily torment with far more patience than of old. Mrs. Gray knew her darling could never be cured, and never even be permanently eased. Hospital doctors had told her so, and a really great physician had once dropped into her boy's room, and made a thorough examination of his poor twisted little body. He had told her that Willie's case was a very remarkable one,

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considering how long he had lived, and that it would be a miracle if he should survive his seventh year.

And now, in his seventh year, he showed signs that his feeble life was flickering. He would have fainting fits, and these made her fearful of leaving him alone. Still, by the most rigid thrift she had managed to save a little money, and work was not an immediate necessity. While she now kept almost ceaseless vigil at her son's bedside, one or two of the neighbours would slip into the room every day; and so, on a certain afternoon, there came to her the whispered tidings that the little dumb girl across the street had suddenly died.

She was a very humane and sweet-hearted woman, and yet for a while she forgot even to pity Mrs. Lynn. All through his later illness Willie had been murmuring half-broken sentences about "poor little dumb Lottie Lynn," and she had made up her mind that in a day or two if her boy rallied again, she would go over and beg Lottie's mother, even if she had to beg on her knees, that the child might be brought to her son. And now, Lottie was dead.

Towards evening she grew mindful of her own selfishness. A kind-hearted girl who lived on the lower floor —an old friend of Willie's—volunteered to sit by him while she paid a visit of sympathy to Mrs. Lynn. She and her bereaved neighbour became fast friends from that hour.

"You spoke so sweet and nice to me," said the mother of Lottie, a day or two after her child's funeral. "I could see how you felt for me. Nobody was quite like you, somehow. I s'pose it's because of your own poor sick boy. And I wouldn't let Lottie go to him, though you told me he he wanted to see her."

"Never mind that," said Mrs. Gray.

"Oh, yes, I do mind it," returned Mrs. Lynn, as she sat in a chair, weak and white, wrapped in a heavy shawl which Mrs. Gray had lent her, and watched by her silent, wide-eyed little girls, all so like the dead one, and the eldest of them seeming absurdly young by contrast with her sisters. "How's your Willie? Is he any better to-day?"

"No; he's worse, I believe," said Mrs. Gray. "I just ran over to see how *you* was. I've got to go back at once. Tilly Ratchett—you know Tilly—is minding him. But oh, Mrs. Lynn, he does moan and call so for——"

The speaker paused. The two women stared into each others eyes. Mrs. Lynn understood, and her slim, pale throat quivered.

"I know what you mean," she muttered. "Here's the other girls. Any one of 'em would do. Take Lizzie, there. She and Lottie, except for an inch or so in height, was like as two peas. Lizze'll play off her sister. She'll keep mum—won't you, Liz dear?"

"Oh, yes," cried the child thus addressed. She sprang to her mother's side; she was intelligent, even for her age, which had nearly passed nine years. She met Mrs. Gray's worriedly questioning eyes with a sweet, firm look.

"I understand what you want me to do, Mrs. Gray," she said. She was a comely child, with fluffy, flaxen hair, and fresh, pink lips and beautifully white teeth.

"God bless you!" faltered Mrs. Gray. She caught the little girl to her breast and kissed her. "Come over with me, then, Lizzie. He doesn't dream your sister's dead. I wouldn't let anybody tell him; I didn't dare. And you'll make believe dumb, just like Lottie, won't you?"

"Oh, yes," said Lizzie with great solemnity. "I'll—I'll make believe, Mrs. Gray, all I can."

Willie lay in sore pain when his new guest was brought to him; but he brightened, and even laughed aloud as he heard that Lottie Lynn, the dumb girl, had consented to come and see him at last. He clutched Lizzie's plump and rosy little hand in his own wan and frail one. "Oh, I'm so glad, I'm so glad!" he murmured. "You can't speak, Lottie, can you? It's too bad! But you don't look ill. Mother said you were ill sometimes, but I s'pose you've got quite well now, ain't you?"

He failed to remember, in his happy excitement, that his mother had told him Lottie Lynn was deaf as well as dumb.

"I dunno what I should do, Lottie, if I couldn't talk at all, like you can't. It must be awful hard *never* to say the least mite of a word to *nobody*.

"Oh, Lottie," cried the boy's plaintive voice, "I *do* suffer so! I *do* suffer so!"

And then Lizzie Lynn forgot the part she was playing. Catching Willie's hand in both her own, she leaned over him and answered: "I am so sorry for you! I am! I am!"

Mrs. Gray, terrified and astonished, hurried to the bed and separated the children's hands. Another fainting fit had fallen upon her son, and when he awoke from it Lizzie Lynn had gone.

But Willie had remembered her words to him. "Lottie Lynn was so sorry for me, mother," he repeatedly said, through all the stillness of the night which followed, "that she forgot she was born dumb, didn't she? And now she won't be dumb any more, will she? Ain't that nice? *Ain't* it nice?"

And a little after dawn, with these two self-comforting questions on his lips, Willie Gray died.

Will Summers.

DO YOU KNOW ANY SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHERS?

IF SO, READ THIS.

The Editor of the *Sunday Reader* is sending each week to one thousand Sunday-schools a *free and carriage paid* parcel of *current numbers* of the *Sunday Reader*.

The copies are not sent to the same Sunday-schools each week, but a register is kept, and every week one thousand names are selected for free grants of *Sunday Readers* until the whole register has been dealt with and every school on the list has received a parcel of papers.

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THE GOOSEHERD.

Yes, there is a difference in the feelings of the refined and the uncultured classes, which makes it impossible for them to live happily together. I had an experience of this in my first love.

Do you know who my first love was? A gooseherd—a real gooseherd. I am not joking. Long after I was a highly respectable young lady, I wept bitter tears over the sorrow he had caused me.

To be sure, at the time when he first set my heart a-fire, I was still in that period of my life when my highest ideal of happiness was to go barefoot. I was eight, he about ten years old; I was the daughter of the lord of the manor, he, the son of our smith.

In the morning, as I was drinking coffee upon the balcony with mamma and my elder brother, he used to go by with his geese and vanish in the direction of the heath. At first he stared at us with naive wonder, without thinking to remove his cap; but after my brother had admonished him that it would be suitable for him to offer a morning greeting to the quality, he would swing his cap in great circles in the air and call up to us, "Good-morning, all," exactly as though he had learnt it by heart.

If my brother happened to be in a good humour I would receive permission to take a roll down to him, as a recognition of his urbanity. This he always snatched out of my hand with a certain greedy anxiety, as though there were danger of my taking it back again.

I can see him now; his sleek, blonde hair hung in a yellow thatch over his sunburnt cheeks; from under it his blue eyes peeped slyly and merrily out; his tattered trousers he had rolled up above his knees, and in his hand he held a slender willow switch, in the green bark of which his skilful hand had cut a spiral row of white rings.

My childish desire first fastened itself upon this switch. I thought it would be charming to hold in my hand such a marvel, so different from all my playthings, and when I had completed the picture by imagining myself driving geese with it and going barefoot, I had reached the pinnacle of earthly bliss.

Naturally, it was this same switch which drew us together. One morning I secretly clapped together the roll spread with honey which I was eating and, hastily excusing myself, ran after him.

When he saw me coming he stopped and looked at me in astonishment, but as soon as he spied the roll in my hand his eye beamed with intelligence.

"Will you give me your switch?" I asked.

"Naw—why?" he returned.

"Because I want it," I replied haughtily, adding more mildly, "and I will give you my roll."

His glance rested longingly upon the dainty morsel, but finally he said: "Naw, I must herd the geese with it; but I'll make you one jus' like it."

"Can you do that yourself?" I asked, filled with admiration.

"Oh, that's nothin' at all," he laughed scornfully. "I c'n make flutes too."

I was so completely carried away by this that I handed him my roll without further ceremony.

That evening brought me the promised switch, which was even more beautiful than my boldest dreams had painted it. What a happy creature I was!

After that we were friends. I divided with him the dainties which were showered from all sides upon me, the darling of the household. In return he dedicated to me the creations of his nimble fingers—flutes, little boxes, houses, dolls' furniture, and above all, his celebrated dancing men, through which I presently became the terror of the entire family.

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Behind the goose coop we held our nightly rendezvous, and exchanged our gifts.

I looked forward all day with joy to this occasion, my thoughts busied with my young hero. I saw him lying in the grass on the sunny heath playing his flute, while I was being tormented with abominable French verbs, and my desire to share that happiness called goose-herding, grew stronger and stronger.

When I confided my feeling to him, he laughed aloud and said:

"Why don't you come too?"

That was enough; and without further deliberation I replied:

"I will go to-morrow."

"But don't forget to bring something to eat," my friend reminded me.

Fortune favoured me. Mademoiselle had a headache at exactly the right time, and put off our lesson. Half beside myself with joy and fear, I sat at the coffee-table, and waited until he came by. My pockets were stuffed full of all sorts of dainties which I had begged from "Mamselle," and beside me lay the switch, which I thought to-day to brandish in loyal fulfilment of my duty.

There he came marching along. He glanced at me with a sly twinkle in his eye as he roared his "Good-morning, all" at us. As soon as I could escape without being observed, I ran after him.

"What have you brought?" was his first remark.

"Two spice cakes, two pieces of bread-and-butter, with brain sausage, a sardine sandwich, and a piece of gooseberry tart," I said, displaying my riches.

He immediately began to eat, while I, scarcely able to restrain my joy, proudly drove the geese before us.

Away on the heath we played husband and wife. Elsie, the tamest of the geese, was our child. We had almost kissed and thrashed the poor thing to death before it succeeded by unheard-of exertions in freeing itself from our hands. After this I prepared dinner for my husband. I took off my white apron, laid it upon the grass for a tablecloth, and grouped the remainder of our food upon it. He seated himself gravely down before it, and I, for my part, was so happy to see with what dispatch he consumed one thing after another that our little house was almost too small to contain me.

The hours passed as in a dream. The sun mounted higher and higher, until its glowing rays shone straight down upon us. I began to feel tired and stupid. I was also hungry; but my husband had eaten everything up. My mouth was dry, and my lips feverish. To cool them, I picked the damp grasses and pressed them to my mouth.

Suddenly the sound of ringing bells floated from afar across the wood. I knew well what that implied; it was the noon signal calling me to dinner.

I sprang up and ran as though pursued by furies.

The next morning my poor friend appeared in the *rôle* of kidnapper and abductor before the High Court of Inquisition. He seemed to regard it as a matter of course that he should figure as whipping-boy, made not the slightest attempt to shift any of the blame from his own shoulders, and took the chastisement administered by my brother with the utmost peace of mind.

Pensively smiling, he rubbed his smarting back on the posts of the verandah, and then hastily took his departure, while I rolled on the ground, sobbing bitterly.

After that I loved him. I devised a thousand expedients to meet him secretly. I purloined like a magpie, in order that he might refresh himself upon the fruits of my thefts. I almost overwhelmed him with tenderness in my efforts to undo that dreadful whipping.

He allowed my love to pass quietly over him, and repaid me with touching attachment and a healthy appetite.

Half a year later fate separated us, and it was nine years before I returned to my old home. My return was sadder than I had ever anticipated. A severe nervous fever attacked me, which confined me for many weeks to my bed. Medical skill had, indeed, wrested me from death, but the blooming young maiden had become a pale, weak shadow. My doctor prescribed as a tonic country air and pine-needle baths, so I was bundled into the train and transported to our country estate.

As I lay back in my chair, thinking, I wondered what had become of my old friend.

"What has become of him?" I asked my brother, and received the pleasant information that he had grown into a spruce, clever lad, and was already the efficient assistant of his father, the smith.

I felt how my heart beat. I tried to reason myself out of such foolishness, but was only partially successful. The dear old memories would not be driven away. Finally I fought them no longer, but painted the picture of our meeting with all the gorgeous colouring of fairyland.

A few days after my arrival I was able to take my first drive, that is to say, I was lifted into the carriage and driven to a peaceful little spot in the woods, where I was laid on the soft moss.

I had selected the place with great care. It offered a view of the smithy, where the playfellow of my youth was at work.

My brother wished to remain with me, and I besought him earnestly not to let me interfere with his customary occupations, for the little maid who attended me quite sufficed to protect me from surprise. And what harm could come to me in the peaceful home wood?

So he drove back home, promising to return for me within two hours.

Then I sent my little companion off to pick strawberries, cautioning her, however, to remain near at hand, and away she sprang with a gleeful shout.

I was alone. Thank goodness, now I could dream to my heart's content. The firs rustled above me, and from the smithy the muffled sound of the hammer rang out on the summer air. The fire upon the forge was blazing brightly, and now and again a dark figure passed in front of it. That must be he.

I never tired of following his movements. I admired his strength and trembled for his safety when the glowing sparks flew about him.

The moments slipped by. My brother surprised me in the midst of my dreamy observation.

"Well, has the time seemed long to you?" he asked jokingly.

I shook my head smilingly and tried to raise myself a little, but was obliged to sink back exhausted on my cushions.

"H'm, h'm!" he said meditatively. "I left the coachman at home, because I thought I could lift you into the carriage by myself; but the seat is high, and I fear I shall hardly be able to accomplish it without hurting you. Grete," turning to the little maid, who had quickly put in an appearance upon the return of the carriage, "run to the smith—the young one, you know—and ask him to come and help me."

He threw a copper on the ground, which the little

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one, beaming with joy, picked up before running away.

I felt the blood mount hotly to my cheeks. I should see him again. He would perform the part of a good Samaritan towards me. Pressing my hand to my fluttering heart, I sat and waited until—until——

Yes, that is he! How strong and handsome he has grown! Clustering fair hair waves around his smoke-blackened countenance, and a soft down covers his powerful chin. Thus must young Siegfried have looked when he was apprenticed to the wicked Mime.

He awkwardly lifts the little cap which sits so saucily on the back of his head, but, smilingly, I hold out my hand and ask: "How are you?"

"How should I be? Very well," he answers with an embarrassed laugh, carefully wiping his sooty fingers upon his leathern apron before accepting my proffered hand.

"Help me lift my sister into the carriage," says my brother.

He wipes his hands again and seizes me—not very gently—by the shoulders; my brother lifts my feet, and in a moment I lie safely upon the carriage cushions.

"Thank you! thank you," I cry, nodding at him smilingly.

He stands at the carriage door, turning his cap in his hands in a confused manner, and glancing first at me and then at my brother.

"He has something on his mind," say I to myself. "The sight of me has recalled old memories—he wishes to talk with me of the happy days when we, in childish innocence, herded geese together; but he does not dare in the presence of my brother. I must help him a little."

"Well, of what are you thinking?" I inquire, looking at him in a most friendly and encouraging manner.

My brother, who had been attending to the horses, turns round and glances at him.

"Ah, so you want your *pour-boire*," he says, reaching in his pocket.

I feel as though I had been struck. "For pity's sake, Max," I stammer, turning hot and cold.

My brother does not hear me, however, and hands him—really, he dare!—and hands him a mark!

I imagine I see the friend of my youth throwing the coin in my brother's face. I struggle up and stretch out my hands to prevent trouble, but what do I see? No, it is not possible, and yet—with my own eyes I see him take the money. He says, "Thank you, kindly." He bows—he is gone.

And I? I stare after him as though he were an evil spirit, and then, with a sigh, sink feebly back upon the cushions.

Thus, my friend, I took leave of my childhood's dream.

I expected my old companion to refuse the proffered coin with dignified indignation, but, to my intense surprise and disappointment, he clutched eagerly at it, and put it into his pocket with glib words of thanks. He turned back to the smithy, and I drove away with my brother.

My hero was a hero no longer. It cost me many a pang for a few days, and then I saw the truth of the remark I made at the beginning. There is a difference in the feelings of the two classes. Malcolm Hawse.

The Knowing Birds Read

THE BIG BUDGET.

When the pie was opened the birds began to sing,
The B.B. is a paper fit to set before a king.

Tonio el Matador.

On the cattle farm where live old Don Antonio, his daughter, Dona Ana, with her husband, Juan Moreno, *el matador de toros*, and their little four-year-old son, Tonio, there is to-day very great rejoicing. To-morrow is the feast day of San Antonio, and there is to be a grand bull fight, at which Juan is to fight two bulls.

Poor Juan had been badly gored over six months ago, and since that time has not been able to do any fighting. He has not been able to make any money. This fact his father-in-law, old Don Antonio, does not let him forget, so Juan is glad that he is to have a chance of stopping the old man's sneers. The old man does not object to looking after his daughter and little Tonio, but he does not care to have Juan about him. And so, when Juan is offered a place in the big fight, he accepts it gladly. As for Dona Ana and Tonio, they are almost out of their heads with delight. Tonio, in his eagerness, betakes himself to the great corral, where he gleefully announces to the assembled peons, and to his own special pet, Diablo, the great black Andalusian bull, who is just his own age, and who loves him devotedly, the great news that to-morrow his own father is to fight two big bulls in the plaza de Toros: that he, Tonio, is to go with mamma, and sit just at the back of the big gate, where he can see it all; that his father is to wear such a lovely costume, all gold and silver and lace, and how glad he is that he is going—how he wishes that he could take all of them, even Diablo!

Poor little Tonio! He does not know, and the peons won't tell him, that El Diablo will be at the bull fight, that he is entered on the bills for the second fight! But not knowing this, Tonio is careful to spend quite a long time with Diablo, giving him sugar, and patting and rubbing his head, appreciating which the great animal affectionately licks the little boy's head and rubs gently against him.

The tremendous bull ring is packed when the three reached it at three o'clock that afternoon. The great patio, or ground floor of the ring, is sanded over, circled all about with the great wooden first barrier. This is where the bulls are fought. And along the top of this high wall are some few seats, where the bull-fighters and their friends and families sit, about twelve or fifteen feet above the ring where the fighting is going on. That is where Dona Ana and little Tonio seat themselves, after kissing their bull-fighter good-bye and wishing him "good-luck." From here they will see everything distinctly, and will not miss a stroke.

And up behind them one tier after another, are the rows of boxes and private seats where the fine people of Mexico sit. Tonio stares at them till his eyes ache.

Now the band begins the first bars of such a lovely swinging Mexican dance that Tonio forgets all about what he will do if the President honours his father, and delightfully watches the bandsmen.

The first bull rushed into the ring—a great brown Atenco beast, with huge curving horns, and hoofs that beat and tear up the ground as he raged on. He has been kept for three days in a dark, close pen, and has been starved all this time so as to make him very furious in the ring. Just as the gate is opened for him to rush through into the ring, a man who is seated above throws down two sharp iron instruments with gay ribbons tied on the ends. The sharp points stick into the bull's flesh and cut him until the blood pours down, so that he roars and bellows with fury, not knowing what it means.

Then Tonio sees his father drop carefully down into the ring, with a red cloth and two "banderillos" (sharp, arrow-like things decorated with ribbons), ready for the bull.

The bull sees Juan, and with his big head lowered until his horns almost sweep the ground, he plunges on. Juan steps forward just a little, and holds out the big red cloak. As he sees it, the bull gives a loud roar that seems to shake the ring, and strikes at the matador with all his might. But Juan steps to one side, and flaps the big cloth right in the animal's face. When the bull, furious and pawing, goes to charge again, he sees that there is another creature with glittering clothes and big red cloth in the ring. So he goes for that, and tries to gore it.

This goes on for some minutes, and then all the cloak men except Juan tumble quickly out of the ring, and two gates open, and three poor bony old horses, blindfolded, are jerked in by their riders, the "picadors." The picadors are bull-fighters who fight on horseback. They have iron on underneath their leather clothes, and carry long wooden lances to worry the bull.

One after the other the bull kills the horses. Tonio hides his head in his mother's lap. The poor *caballos!* How can the people allow them to be so treated?

Now all the people, their taste for blood satisfied, call loudly with many hand clappings for *"Juan! El matador!"* meaning that they want the bull killed.

Now follows the usual trial of skill between man and beast, and the latter is killed by a clever lunge. Poor toro! He has fought a good fight.

Juan Moreno's work has been well done, and all the people cry: "Bravo! Bravo, Juan Moreno!" And down into the ring pour all sorts of things—hats,

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flowers from pretty women, cigars, dollars, and purses. The President leans forward, and throws down, smiling, a heavy purse and some of his own good cigars.

And you can imagine how Tonio watches it all, crying from pure joy, with his eyes looking as though they would come out of his head.

Soon the dead bull is dragged out by six gaily decorated mules, and the ring is sanded for the entrance of the second bull.

Everybody is whispering that this is the bull of the day, a fine Andalusian, a beauty! Some wonder if Juan Moreno can handle him. Although the best toreado in all Mexico, Juan has been disabled for a long time, and many people notice that he looks very tired now, as he sits with his wife holding his little son, who has from excitement and joy succumbed to suggestion from the "Land of Nod." Juan climbs down, when the first trumpet blows, to go back to the ring, Dona Ana, vaguely uneasy, takes the little boy in her arms.

Meantime, as Juan Moreno and fully twelve more cloth and banderillo men unsuccessfully cope with the magnificent wild beast that has already gored one man to death, Tonio sleeps peacefully, knowing nothing.

The bull has killed four horses and one man. Every moment his strength, force, and wild fury seem to increase. Bellowing, rushing, pawing and plunging, even the best of the matadors have no chance against him! And this Juan Moreno knows. Worn out and tired from the previous fight, his work gets feebler and feebler; but for his wife and child there, watching him, he would give up and let the bull trample him!

All of a sudden the people who are eagerly, breathlessly watching see the matador stumble. He recovers himself and avoids the bull. But his eyes are failing, and he feels strangely weak. All the blood is rushing to his head. He cannot avoid the bull another time. He sees the raging black charge, and, dropping the sword, tries to say a "Padre Nuestro." A tiny dot of red and gold seems to flash before his eyes, then he sinks helplessly on the ground, amid the roars and screams of 8,000 people. Carelessly he waits for the goring of the bull. It does not come. Then he tries to struggle to his feet. Another wild shout goes up from the many throats. He looks, trying to clear his eyes.

Not ten feet from him is the great bull Diablo, and, reaching up, patting the huge head and horns, and saying many loving Spanish words, is the little son Tonio! Paralysed, helpless, unable to think or breathe, the unhappy bull-fighter stares, unable to take his eyes away. His only little boy, Tonio! But how strangely the wild, mad beast is behaving! Look, actually he is caressing the child's upturned face with his coarse red tongue, all covered with foam as it is! Then poor Juan faints and knows nothing more for many hours!

Tonio has saved his father's life! Waking suddenly, and with no thought of anything but that it was Diablo, his dear playfellow, that men were trying to torture, furious that they should dare to do so, he had leapt down into the ring, and just in time.

You can imagine how the people cheered "the little bull-fighter," as they called him; and not only that, but the President himself sent for and talked to Tonio, and gave him a bill for a hundred dollars, and Mrs. President kissed him, and the audience, not to be outdone, collected among themselves such a sum of money that people say to this day that the biggest fee ever collected in Mexico by a bull-fighter was that given to little *Tonio el matador*.

W. Sheldon.

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CONTENTS:

ARTISTS AND THEIR WORK. (Illustrated.) Amongst the many charming pictures which are reproduced this month are splendid examples of the work of Mr. Solomon J. Solomon, A.R.A., as well as a most amusing picture by M. Pirez, and many others equally as interesting and as relevant.

MOUNTAINEERING IN ENGLAND. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By Austin Fayers. The striking photographs which illustrate this article show that it is quite unnecessary to go to Switzerland to break one's neck in mountaineering. The climbing that can be obtained at home is as perilous and as excellent a test for the nerves as the most courageous and hardy mountaineer could desire.

REAL GHOST STORIES. By E. and H. Heron. No. III.—The Story of the Moor Road. (Illustrated by B. E. Minns.) These ghost stories are causing quite a sensation. Their special interest lies in the fact that they are based on actual occurrences. With each story a photograph is given of the actual spot at which the ghost appeared.

THE WEALTH OF THE WORLD. Written and illustrated by J. Holt Schooling. Here we have presented to us in picturesque form, some most interesting facts about the distribution of the wealth of the world. Mr. J. Holt Schooling, the famous statistician, who is responsible for the article, shows us a photograph of a pile of bank-notes, worth fifteen millions sterling, tells us which are the wealthiest countries of the world, and amongst the many picturesque comparisons he makes is this: if the wealth of the world were converted into gold, it would make a road from Westminster Bridge to Dorking (nearly 24 miles), 18ft. wide and 6in. thick

A CORNER IN LIGHTNING. (Illustrated by H. Piffard.) By George Griffith. (A very exciting complete story.)

CHANGING SILVER INTO GOLD. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By Herbert C. Fyfe. This article gives full information about the remarkable discovery which has recently been made by Dr. Emmens. This eminent New York scientist has actually succeeded in converting silver into gold. He is now buying silver which the United States Assay Office has declared to be entirely free from all traces of gold, and this silver he actually converts into a metal which the United States Mint buys from him as gold, and pays him the full gold price for it.

JUST LIKE THE WORLD. (Illustrated by S. Nation.) By Clifton Bingham.

THE DEVIL'S PICTURE-BOOKS. (Illustrated with Examples.) By J. H. Kemmis. Under this title are reproduced a most interesting series of the playing-cards used in different parts of the world. The series includes some very eccentric specimens from India, China, and Japan, as well as the most interesting cards in use in European countries.

THE SACRIFICE OF VENTRIS PERUGINI. (Illustrated by Hana.) By Winifred Graham. (A complete story.)

HOW THE HANDS ARE HELD. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By E. Le Breton-Martin. The author of this article has obtained a very striking series of photographs of the most curious attitudes for carrying the hands, which have come under his observation. Some people, for instance, clench their fists when they are walking, others spread their fingers out fan-shape, and others again have a finger only or a thumb projecting. A whole host of interesting examples are given.

A FAIR CONSPIRATOR. (Illustrated by G. G. Manton.) By James Workman. This is a very charming story of the English civil war.

THE PERSONAL INTERESTS OF MR. GLADSTONE. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By W. Arthur Woodward. This is the most complete account that has ever been published of Mr. Gladstone's recreations throughout his long and varied career. Here Mr. Gladstone is presented to us as a cricketer, an oarsman, a football-player, a pedestrian, a sportsman and a singer, besides in the pursuit of many other pastimes almost too numerous to mention. The excellent photographs which are reproduced form a fitting accompaniment to this interesting article.

DA PIETRA'S WAGER. (Illustrated by A. Kemp Tebby.) By H. Ryall. A story.

A RAINY DAY. By J. J. Bell.

ANIMAL ACROBATS. (Illustrated by H. Piffard.) By J. Malcolm Fraser. In this article a description is given of some of the very clever tricks which dogs and cats have been trained to perform, and illustrations are given of some of the most difficult feats. One dog for instance, has been trained to balance itself on one of its fore feet, two others have been trained to box, and another to preserve its equilibrium on a ball which is balanced on a plank running across the arena.

THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN KETTLE. No. IX.—The Raiding of Donna Clothilde. (Illustrated by Stanley L. Wood.) By Cutcliffe Hyne. (A complete story.)

THE DEVIL-MAN. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By Merriden Howard. An interview with Mr. Douglas Beaufort who was officially dispatched by the British Government to conciliate the Sultan of Morocco. Mr. Beaufort tells his amusing experiences at the Sultan's Court and explains some of his most clever tricks.

LIFE'S LITTLE WORRIES. (Illustrated by A. Popini.) By W. L. Alden. This month Mr. Alden criticises in his most amusing manner, the little worries connected with our postal arrangements, with corks, with spectacles, and eye-glasses, and with professional gardeners.

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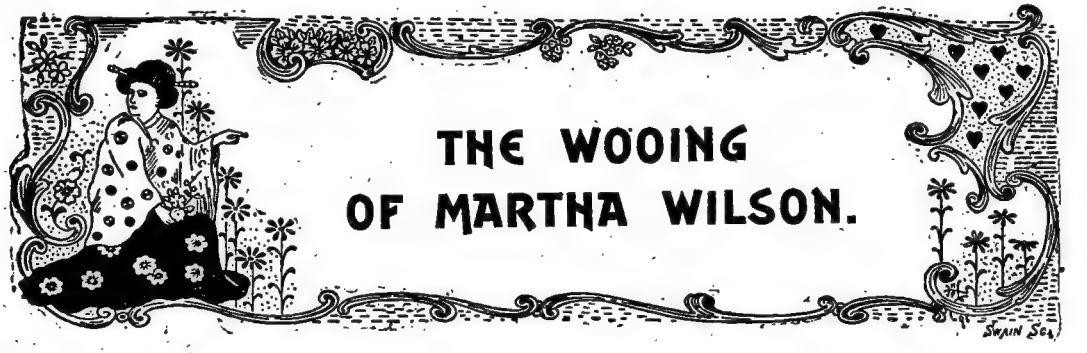

THE WOOING OF MARTHA WILSON.

Anthony Wilson, Esq., of Chester Square, Belgravia, arrived one fine summer afternoon in Relsham, and drove in a specially ordered carriage to the Grand Hotel. He was accompanied by his daughter Martha, and her maid.

Wilson was a retired cattle-dealer, and, unlike many "self-made" men, he was proud of his lowly origin. He had succeeded, by dint of hard work and some timely assistance on the part of Dame Fortune, in accumulating great wealth, and had retired from business to spend it in ease, and to assure for his only daughter the position in society that he coveted for her.

"You won't find that gal's equal anywheres," he would declare earnestly. "She's a perfect daisy, that she is! Ah, if Maria had only lived to see her now she's growed up and able to have the best in the market!"

Martha was certainly an attractive young lady. She possessed a trim, well-rounded figure, really pretty features, a splendid complexion, and an enchanting smile. She had received an excellent education, and moved with ease and grace in such society as her father's money had procured an entrance for her.

Anthony Wilson was a "warm" man, and just a little fond of making the fact known. He had journeyed to Relsham to gratify his daughter's wish to see the flower show, and he was determined to make a stir in the place.

"We'll let things go down 'ere, Pat," he said to his daughter as they drove to the hotel. "We'll make 'em stare, or my name's not Tony!" And he leant back in his seat with a self-satisfied smile.

"I have no doubt we shall pass a very pleasant time, father," answered Martha with a smile. Her father's illiterate style of speech and his ostentatious display of wealth grated upon her finer feelings at times; but he was good to her, he doted upon her, and her affection and gratitude overwhelmed all other sentiments.

There were numerous visitors in Relsham, and Martha Wilson and her father soon became centres of attraction, for different reasons.

It had been dawning upon the retired cattle dealer for some little time that his presence was at times a bar to his daughter's progress, and he determined to keep in the background as much as possible while they were at Relsham.

Martha went for a walk that evening with her maid, a dark-eyed Spanish woman, whom they had engaged during a week's stay at Gibraltar, and Wilson was left to pass the time in the hotel as agreeably as he could. It was his own wish.

There were three persons in the hotel to whom the old man's attention was quickly drawn. He summed them up very quickly, and at once determined to become acquainted with them.

"Them two young fellows over there are aristocrats," he murmured. "Look likely young chaps enough, and just about Pat's age. The tall one suits me best; wonder if he's got a title or likely to have one? I must find out who he is. Then there's that foreigner; he's smart, and I fancied I 'eard the waiter call 'im 'Count.' But," with a shake of the head, "that kind o' cattle are rather awkward to deal in."

Judicious inquiry of a waiter elicited the fact that the Count had been there before, and that he was provided with letters of introduction to some of the magnates of the neighbouring city—in short, he was a real Spanish nobleman.

That settled it. In less than five minutes the retired dealer had accidentally trodden upon the toes of the Count, which led to profuse apologies, and the ordering by Wilson of a bottle of the best wine in the place. The nobleman was most affable, and in a very short space of time the two were talking as though they had known each other for years.

"Yes," said Wilson, "my daughter wanted to come down here to see the show." He spoke loudly, falling into the error so often committed by persons speaking to a foreigner—under the impression that it is necessary to talk in a loud tone in order to be understood. "Clever gal, she is."

"I have noticed the señorita," returned the Spaniard gracefully. "Ah! We have pretty girls in Spain, but your daughter is a—a—Venus, Señor Wilson!"

The old man's face flushed with pleasure and pride.

"Martha is a fine young woman," he stammered, "and she is worth her weight in gold. Takes after her poor mother." Then he added to himself: "He's a perfect gent and mighty civil. I'll fix this up for Pat."

"You will introduce me to her, my good sir?" asked the Count in a persuasive tone.

"She'll be delighted, Count," replied Wilson, turning the title over on his tongue.

The time passed quickly. Wilson did most of the talking, and occasionally succeeded in placing an *h* in its proper place. The Count, whose eyes took in everything, suddenly espied Martha in the garden at the back of the hotel, and at once mentioned the fact. Wilson jumped up and hurried his companion out of the building to be introduced.

The introduction was soon over. The Count, with his graceful bearing and flowery style, made a great impression on Martha; her eyes dropped as they met

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the piercing orbs of the Spaniard, and a peculiar look passed over his features.

At that moment he turned to make a remark to Wilson and his glance fell upon the maid. The sound died away on his lips, the two stared at one another for a second, then the maid quietly walked along the path.

"You have a foreign maid, Miss Wilson?" he queried pleasantly.

"Yes, sinyor," interposed her father. "She is a countrywoman of yours. We engaged her when we were in Gibraltar."

"I thought she came from my beloved country," replied the noble son of Castile. "Ah! It is long since I heard my native tongue—weeks! I should like to speak with the maid—if I might."

"Of course! Call her, Martha."

Angela was called and came forward slowly. The Count spoke to her, and they exchanged a few sentences rapidly in the Catalan dialect, after which the maid bowed and retired.

That night, when the Count went into his room, he locked the door carefully, opened a drawer in the dressing table, and drew from it an elegant pistol, a toy in appearance, but in reality a deadly weapon. He examined it, and then placed it in his breast pocket with a cynical smile.

"Angela used to have a temper—a very bad temper," he muttered in his own tongue. "I expect it has become even worse lately, and it is well to be prepared."

The next day passed without incident. The old man and his daughter went to the show accompanied by the Count; and on their return to the hotel they dined at the same table, together with the two young men already mentioned. The Count was very attentive to Martha, but he was somewhat chagrined to find that he did not make such progress as he anticipated; the tall young man, whose name was Arthur Merstham, was rapidly ingratiating himself with the cattle dealer's pretty daughter and receiving a fair share of her favour.

It was about ten o'clock when the Spaniard bade his new friends good-night. He sauntered out of the hotel, smoking a cigarette, and strolled lazily along the lane close by until he came to a rough seat. He sat down and made himself as comfortable as he could, evidently with the intention of waiting for someone.

He had not long to wait. A light footfall struck his ear and he arose to find himself confronted by Angela.

"Well?" she asked.

"Let us sit down," he said curtly. "We can talk better."

They sat down and the woman lifted her veil. Her face was very white and set, and her eyes glittered angrily; but it was too dark for the other to see all this.

"After we parted," began the man, "I had a letter from you in which you swore to have revenge. You prayed that I might cross your path and so forth. Well, Angela, fate has favoured you and our paths cross."

"Yes," she said, drawing her breath through her set teeth.

"Well, *querida mia*, I suppose you wish to denounce me to the opulent cattle dealer and his daughter? I asked you to wait till to-night and have a talk with me before you decided to begin your revenge. Now, what do you intend to do?"

"I shall not consider your feelings, Esteban."

"I do not ask you to do so, Angela," he retorted. "I ask you to consider yourself. You are in a strange land, working for a living; would you not prefer to have a little house in your native Barcelona, with an assured income?"

"Why do you ask that?" she queried scornfully. "I am not a lady's maid from choice. Why do you say that?"

"If you try to gratify your desire for revenge," proceeded the Count coolly, "you will not even continue to be a lady's maid; my word will be accepted rather than yours, and you will be an outcast; I will see to that! But if you do as I say, the little house and the income will be yours. I shall be able to buy your silence."

"How much?" she asked quietly.

"I will give you one hundred pounds now—two thousand five hundred pesetas, Angela—and if you help me in my plans you shall share in the profits. You can guess what my plans are. This Wilson is very rich, and I have a fancy to be related to him. It would not surprise you to hear me call him 'father,' eh? No. I like this pretty English girl, and it really is time that I settled down, is it not? My future is assured, whatever you may try to do; but you can help me if you will only study your own interests."

He fancied that he detected a movement of an aggressive nature, and he gripped his pistol. The lynx-like eyes of the woman perceived his action; she knew that he was not a man to stick at trifles, and that she must act accordingly.

"Don't be foolish, Angela," he continued more gently. "You must see that it is better for you to assist me than to try to hinder me. The chances are on my side."

"You speak truly," she said. "I must reflect."

He did not notice anything peculiar in the tone in which she uttered the last sentence; he was too elated at the idea of having again moulded her to his will, as he had so often done in the past. He drew her closer to him, and spoke in the tender manner which he knew so well how to assume.

"What do you want me to do, Esteban?"

"That is my own Angela once more!" he cried, drawing her face to his and kissing her. "What fools these women are!" was his mental observation. But he said aloud: "Listen, sweet, and you will learn how you can help me."

After that interview, the Count's wooing progressed apace. Martha ceased to bestow any attention upon Merstham, who appeared to accept his discomfort with manly dignity, and ceased to dine at the same table.

The flower show was over, but there were various functions to keep the visitors in Relsham—the last being a ball.

The Count and Angela had several interviews, at which she seemed sullen, but ready to do his bidding. That was all he wanted; had she been more agreeable he would have suspected her sincerity.

Three days before the ball, the Count asked Wilson for permisson to sue for the hand of his daughter. The "merchant prince" (as the Spaniard called him—to his face) was delighted, and then and there stated his intention of settling a quarter of a million on Martha on the day she became the Countess of Villanova. "Countess"! The old man rolled the title on his tongue, Martha a Countess! He could scarcely realise it.

Martha herself received the proposal with favour and becoming modesty; but she asked for time to consider, and promised to give him an answer on the evening of

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the ball. He would have liked to draw her to his breast and caress her—as he had done to Angela—but there was something about this pretty English girl which prevented him from making the attempt.

"All the sweeter when it comes," he murmured. "It will not be long now, and I know how to wait."

Great preparations had been made for the ball. Mr. Anthony Wilson had made up his mind that his brilliant stay should have a brilliant finish, and had placed a large sum at the disposal of his daughter for "trimmings." Martha's dress was simple compared with his notion of what it should be, but the material was the best that money could purchase.

The ball was a grand success; Relsham thought those who took part in it would talk about it for many a day.

The Count waited impatiently for the interval, when he was to receive his answer. But when the interval arrived Martha was not to be seen. The Count was perplexed, and Wilson equally so. The Spaniard, wandering about in search of her, became conscious of the fact that Merstham had also disappeared, and began to feel uneasy. He was about to return to the ball-room—the interval was nearly over—when Mr. Yorke, Merstham's friend, came towards him.

"If you will come with me, Count," he said politely, "I can take you to someone who is anxious to see you before the dancing begins again."

The Count looked surprised, but intimated his willingness to accompany Yorke. "Those cold English girls are strange," he murmured. "Ah, there is more in a Spaniard, but the money is wanting."

Yorke conducted him towards a room in which the Count could see a number of gentleman. As they approached the door, the Count saw Merstham coming to meet him.

"I have been requested to introduce you to a lady, Count," he said. "A lady who has something to tell you."

The Spaniard glanced about him in bewilderment. Decidedly, the English girls were strange! Did they usually accept a proposal of marriage before a number of gentlemen witnesses? He noticed that the countenances of those present wore an expectant look. He was about to speak when a hand was placed upon his shoulder; he turned quickly, and found himself confronted by Angela.

"*You?*" he cried, forgetting himself in his surprise and confusion.

She was dressed in ball costume, and carried a fan in an easy, but indolent manner. Her face was pale, but her eyes gleamed with hate.

"Yes, Conde de Villanova," she said in steady, determined tones. "I have had you brought here to hold you up to the ridicule and contempt of those who have believed you to be a gentleman. You used me as a toy in Madrid, and when you threw me aside I swore to have revenge. You thought that you had won me over to assist you in your wicked design to obtain the hand of Miss Wilson. You wanted her father's money. You offered me a share. But I am not so bad as that! You had your little plot; I had mine. I have been successful; you have failed. Miss Wilson knows all. This is my revenge. I denounce you in front of all these honourable Englishmen as a—as a cowardly villain! I brand you as a scoundrel unfit for the society of men and women, and I do it publicly like this because you dare not deny it. You have betrayed yourself in your surprise, as I thought you would. In private your word would have been accepted before mine."

The short sentences, spoken with a pretty accent and in a tone that indicated deadly determination, spread wonder and indignation among the gentlemen. The Count, hardened rascal as he was, cowered beneath her words like a whipped hound. Not until she had finished speaking did he appear to recover some of his self possession, but one look convinced him that he was condemned. He glared at her as though he would strangle her; then he slunk away amidst the murmurs of the spectators.

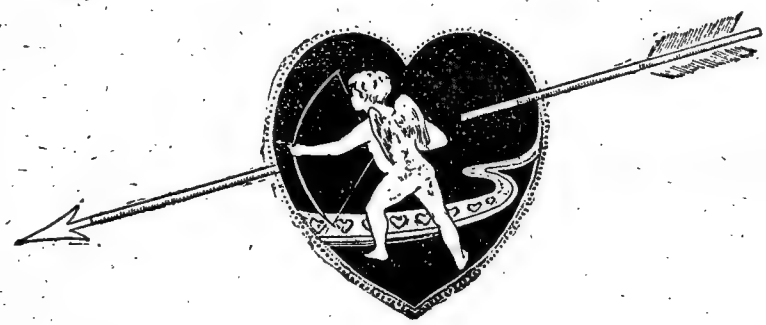
The affair created a tremendous sensation. The Spaniard left Relsham early the next morning, and left for France on the following day. He never dared show his face in English society again.

The plot had been arranged by Angela with the assistance of Merstham. Martha had been told by her maid of the Count's true character, and that it would be exposed, and she had lent herself to the plot to the extent of deceiving the Count as to her real feelings. But she had not known the exact nature of the plot.

Wilson's exasperation had a little disappointment mixed with it—at the loss of a title. But that was quickly dissipated by the announcement that Merstham was a suitor for Martha's hand, and that he was the nephew and prospective heir of the Earl of Helmsdale.

Angela has her house and an assured income in a pretty seaside town in the south of England.

G. E. Lingen.



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THE GOLD MAGNET.

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "Valdar the Oft-Born," "Briton or Boer?" "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XLII.

Madame Sybil Shoots.

The Maxims got their work in so quickly that the only reply from the deck of the gold-ship was a scattered, ineffectual volley, which merely resulted in the wounding of two or three of the *Minnehaha's* crew.

"We may as well go on now we've begun," said Lorrain. "Clear the decks, and then we'll board. We must have that coal at any price."

"Right, Seenyor. Just my idea!" replied the skipper.

And so the murderous work went on for two or three minutes longer. Then the bullet-storm ceased, and the yacht ran up close alongside the *State of Oregon*, which was still driving ahead at her best speed. As the sides touched half-a-dozen men sprang on board with ropes to lash them fast, and a dozen others armed with revolvers and short bayonet-swords sprang over the rail on to the blood-stained deck.

Captain Peters' idea was not to stop to take the coal out in the dangerous waters of the Strait, but to run the two steamers out towards the open sea and fill his bunkers as they went along. The remainder of the crew and passengers of the *State of Oregon* were therefore kept below by sentries placed over the companion-ways, and the stokers and engineers were promised their lives and the ship when the pirates had done with her if they would keep at work till the coal was transferred. If they refused they were to be shot, and their places supplied by men from the *Minnehaha*.

They naturally took the one chance of safety, however slender it was, and went on with their work. Meanwhile the heads of the two vessels were turned westward, and as they steamed along side by side the bunkers were thrown open, the derricks and donkey-engines were set to work, and all available hands were soon busily engaged in transferring the precious fuel from the gold-ship to her captor.

They travelled slowly, as twelve knots was the very best that could be got out of the American steamer's engines; but they ploughed steadily along for over an hour towards Dixon's Entrance, and Captain Peters and Lorrain were congratulating themselves on their smartness and success in getting out of what might have been a very tight place, when suddenly, right ahead, the white gleams of three searchlights, one of which was a good deal higher up than the other two, flashed out of the misty distance and began to sweep to and fro in wide circles over the grey, smooth water.

"Caught, by the great Snake!" said Captain Peters, with a gasp which ended in a snort of disgust. "There's no way out for us there, Seenyor. Stop that coaling, come aboard, all of you, and cast off. Get a wriggle on you, now! Cæsar's ghost, they're coming up pretty slick! Those low lights belong to a couple of destroyers, and I shouldn't wonder if that middle one isn't our old friend the *Pocahontas*. Ready with those after guns there! Never mind casting off them ropes, cut 'em!"

The little skipper issued his orders with a rapidity which showed how serious the situation seemed to him. Lorrain jumped down from the bridge and made a hurried inspection of the guns and ammunition, and gave strict orders that not a shot was to be fired or a light shown as long as there was a chance of escaping unseen.

The *Minnehaha* was clear of the *State of Oregon* in a few minutes, but short as the delay was, it was already too long. A beam from the centre search-light struck her just as she was edging away under cover of the gold-ship's hull. The next instant the report of a cannon boomed out, and a projectile splashed into the water a couple of hundred yards ahead of her. Lorrain was standing near one of the after dynamite guns when this happened. Inspired by a sudden thought he sprang to it, and with his own hand turned it on to the water-line of the *State of Oregon*, took deliberate aim, and fired. The dynamite exploded just under the quarter, and ripped a great gaping hole in the thin plating. The stricken vessel shuddered and lurched heavily over.

"It's a pity to send so much good coal and gold to the bottom," he said as he rejoined Captain Peters on the bridge, "but that'll keep them busy for half-an-hour or so. They won't come past her without saving what we've left of her people. How much did you get out of her, Captain?"

"About thirty tons I reckon, and I believe seven or eight casks of petroleum. That'll keep the oil-blast going for about twelve hours, so if that isn't the *Pocahontas* we shall get away all right. If it is we're going to have a darned tight squeeze."

"How much is she making now?" asked Lorrain a trifle anxiously.

"A bit over thirty, Seenyor, and I'm afraid that's her absolute best. Her bottom's as foul as a homeward-bound whaler's. If we get over the other side we'll have to dock her somewhere and have a clean up. Ay, look yonder, that was a good idea of yours. See, they're stopping to investigate. Now they'll know who we are if they weren't sure before. Waal, if that ain't one of the darnedest misfortunes that ever came my way I'll give up pirating and start a dry-goods store—there's the moon, and there's the wind from the land! Now you'll see this mist go like a cloud of steam on a hot day. I reckon they won't want them search-lights much longer."

Lorrain looked up and saw the full moon rising over the wooded slopes of the main-land. He ground out a muttered series of Anglo-Spanish oaths and went down on deck to meet her ladyship and Madame Sybil, who had just come

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up from the saloon. He told them in a few words what had happened and then Madame Sybil, saying that she had forgotten her shawl, left them and went below again. When she came back she had a light, fleecy woollen shawl doubled round her neck, and in the side pocket of her neatly-fitting ulster was a very business-like little five-chambered Smith-Wesson revolver. There was also a look in her eyes which would have told a close observer that she had not brought the pistol with her for nothing.

The *Minnehaha* was now spinning along at her best possible speed southward. The *Quail* was standing by the disabled steamer, and the *Pocahontas* and the *Mallard* had taken up the chase again at the best sea-speed of the latter, which was about thirty knots. If anything the *Minnehaha* was doing slightly better than her pursuers, and Captain Peters was beginning to hope that if the fuel only held out they would get away after all, at any rate for the time being, when to his utter disgust a searchlight flashed up from the southward and waved to and fro in a quick, jerky fashion, evidently making a signal.

"I reckon the skipper of that hooker was right when he said that the squadron was down south," he said with a strange calmness which had succeeded his anger and flurry. "Anyhow there are war-ships down there and we're between two fires. I reckon it's a case of running the gauntlet again, so we may as well make the best rush we can for it."

"I suppose you haven't forgotten, Captain, that there's a channel between the two islands?" said the second officer, who was steering in the wheel-house. "We ought to be just off it now. It's a bit risky, even for us, but I think we could get through, and if we could, nothing but one of those small craft could follow us."

"Mr. Lennox," said the skipper in a much more genial tone than he usually used to his subordinates, "I guess you've gone pretty near to saving the ship. If we get through, that suggestion shall be worth something to you. Put her round and let's find it right away. D'you happen to know the channel?"

"I've been through once on a yachting trip, Captain," he replied. "It was a smaller craft than this, but I think I can put this one through too."

"Go ahead then," said the skipper. "Anyhow, the rocks won't shoot at us, and they won't hurt us if we don't hit them first."

"Confound the fellow!" Tristam was saying to Courtland almost at the same moment on the navigating bridge of the *Pocahontas*. "Confound him, he's going to try for the channel. Well, it's a pretty plucky thing to do. Captain Markham, do you think we can get through there?"

The captain shook his head as he replied:

"I'm afraid not, Mr. Tristam, at least not at this speed.

"I could take the ship through if it were absolutely necessary, taking soundings and all that sort of thing, but I expect he'll go through pretty nearly at full speed, as it's neck or nothing with him. I must say that I think he's made the best choice. He has more chance of getting through there than he was of getting through the squadron without getting sunk."

"Well then," said Courtland, "I reckon the best thing we can do is to let the *Mallard* go in first and follow her as fast as we can, so as to give her the cover of the guns. We can't stick at a bit of danger, you know, Captain; we're going to see this through somehow, and if the *Pocahontas* can get into that channel she's going into it. You do all you can and leave the responsibility to me. What do you say, Tristam?"

"If the ship were mine I suppose I should do the same," said Tristam shortly.

"Of course you would," said Courtland. "Let her go, Captain, give her full speed, every yard you've got, and see if you can't cut that little scoundrel off before he gets in. That'll be better than following her. I should think the Commander might try a shot or two at him as we go across. I'll go and see him."

The course of the *Pocahontas* altered as her speed increased, and the *Mallard* followed her, making a gallant struggle, but not entirely successful to keep up. The cruiser-yacht now began to gain perceptibly on the *Minnehaha*, and presently little black shapes surmounted by flaming funnels became visible to the southward, and behind them bigger shapes vomiting volumes of black smoke up into the moonlit air. There were three destroyers now on the heels of the flying *Minnchaha*, and they were racing after her like dogs after their quarry. But the land was getting very near now, and a dim opening appeared between the two tree-clad shores, which were rising as if by magic up out of the water. It was terribly risky work, rushing at railway speed into the mouth of a narrow, almost unknown channel, but there were worse risks behind, and so Captain Peters, standing by the wheel-house ready to give his second officer at the wheel his bearings, held on to every knot that the panting boilers and grinding engines of the *Minnehaha* could give him.

The smaller guns of her pursuers soon began to spit fire and smoke at her as they closed in. The big guns were not to be used except in the last necessity, not out of consideration for those on board the pirate, but on account of that priceless little item of her cargo which the explosion of a hundred pound shell on board her might lose beyond all hope of finding. The object was to cripple her with the lighter shot if possible, and then take her by boarding, and so recover both her golden plunder and the Gold Magnet itself.

Captain Peters was not slow in replying with his after dynamite guns and the three-pounder Maxim-Nordenfeldt. But the practice was not very good on either side in the faint, baffling light, and before any great harm had been done the *Minnehaha* had dashed into the entrance and swung round out of sight behind a point of rock.

At the same moment her search-light flashed out ahead, and a broad fan of white radiance illuminated the narrow, winding channel and the black, wicked-looking little rocks for several hundred yards ahead of her. The skipper, all eyes and nerves, stood in front of the wheel-house ready to give Lennox his course by voice and signal. Madame Sybil was just inside sheltering from the wind, and Lorrain was standing at the star-board end of the bridge smoking a cigar and discussing the chances of escape with her ladyship.

The three destroyers *Virago*, *Vulture* and *Mallard* raced neck and neck for the opening close followed by the *Pocahontas*, which, having failed to cut off the *Minnehaha*, had slowed down a little to let the smaller craft show her the way. The *Mallard* slipped round the point first, just in time to see the chase disappear for the second time round a pine-crowned bluff. The three boats steamed round after her and caught a glimpse of her about a mile ahead, still spinning along with reckless desperation through the rock-strewn waters of the channel, and so for nearly two hours the chase went on, both pursuers and pursued escaping the rocks and banks almost by miracles as they swept past them at a head-long speed, exchanging shots every now and then as they came in sight of each other, but, as far as could be seen, doing no damage on either side.

"Shouldn't wonder if we fooled 'em yet," said Captain Peters, in a brief interval between his constant "Port—starboard—steady a bit—now port again—steady—hold her up!" which had been going on without intermission since they had entered the channel. "Ah! there's the sea at last, and a mighty ugly corner to turn. By Gosh, there's going to be a scrape there! Hold her up, Lennox, and stand by to put her hard over when you get the word. If you let a spoke go you'll smash her."

Dead ahead was a high bluff, with a long black tongue of rock stretching out about half a mile from it. Off the opposite shore was a low, rocky island, which almost met it, and nearer in was another island, which left only a narrow

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streak of water between itself and the shore, and this streak made a sharp curve that was almost a semi-circle, and the only way to freedom was round this and past the point. Not only her ladyship and Madame Sybil, but every man on deck stared at this perilous passage in breathless suspense as the *Minnehaha* rushed into it.

"Ready now, Lennox! Starboard a bit—now—a bit more—steady—that's nicely—a bit more—more—stand by to shove her round—let go—now port—hard over—hard, I say, *hard* and we're round!"

Bang!

"Good Heavens, what was that!"

Just as the *Minnehaha's* bow was about to swing round the rocky point in obedience to her helm, the report of a pistol rang out in the wheel-house, and a few whiffs of smoke drifted out of the door. Lennox, who had dragged the wheel over, hanging on to it with all his weight, let go, and collapsed in a heap under it with a bullet hole in the back of his head. The wheel sprang back, and the *Minnehaha* seemed to shake her head like a horse released from the rein, and dashed straight at the rocks. Captain Peters instinctively sprang to the engine-telegraph, but before he had put the handle over there was a sharp, grinding, ripping crash. Everyone on deck was hurled prone in an instant, the whirling screws flung out torrents of foam from the stern, but the little *Minnehaha* would never move again. She had run her last race and almost won, and there, within a few yards of freedom, she was lying helpless, with a fourth of her length out of the water, fast-wedged in the grip of the rocks.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The Magnet Comes Back.

The moment Captain Peters picked himself up he made a rush for the wheelhouse. Madame Sybil was lying on the floor with a pistol in her hand.

"So it was you, was it!" he shouted.

She jerked herself up to a half-sitting position, shot one brief glance at him out of her eyes blazing with hate and loathing, and laughed shrilly:

"Yes, I did it, and I'm glad. You have killed my son and made my life a wreck. Now die yourself!"

She put the revolver up and fired at him, but she made the usual mistake, and although he was not two yards from her and she aimed, as she thought, at his chest, the bullet flew high, knocked his cap off and gashed his scalp. Still it staggered him. The next moment, just as Lorrain ran forward to catch him as he reeled back, there was a sharp, shrill report on the lower deck, followed by an explosion which shook the already sorely-stricken ship from stern to funnel. The *Mallard* had rounded the last bend and sent a twelve-pounder shell into the deck-cabin. Another from the *Vulture* hit her close by the stern-post, and smashed her starboard propeller, besides tearing a great hole in her plates, into which the water immediately began to rush.

"We are not going to lie here to be smashed to bits like a log," said Lorrain between his clenched teeth. "Let that woman alone, Peters. She can't get away. We'll take a gun apiece, and go to Kingdom Come in good company."

He had tied his handkerchief round the skipper's head while he was saying this, and given him a good drink of brandy out of his flask, which happened to be in his overcoat pocket. Captain Peters was just the man to die fighting, and the idea agreed perfectly with his mood.

"Right you are, Seenyor," he said. "We've got to pass in our checks, but I reckon the hand is not played out yet. Come on!"

Lorrain helped him down off the bridge on to the upper deck. The two mid-ship dynamite guns were uninjured, and the slope of the deck gave them a good elevation. The ammunition was all ready by them, but the men were running about in something like panic, wondering what to do and doing nothing. Lorrain's clear, steady voice, and his perfect habit of command instantly brought them back to their senses.

"Come along, boys!" he shouted. "We're not going to be hit without hitting back, and if we've got to go under we won't go alone. Get to your stations and give them every gun you can fire—Maxims and all."

The men rallied instantly from panic to the grim desperation of despair. They knew that to be caught was to be hanged, and naturally they preferred to die fighting. There were no cowards among them, for the simple reason that Captain Peters had shot with his own hand every man who on any occasion had showed the white feather. Three dynamite guns, the three-pounder Maxim-Nordenfeldt, and two Maxims were immediately manned, and before the *Mallard* and the *Vulture* had reached the narrow bend, through which only one of them could come at once, the crippled *Minnehaha*, like a wolf at bay, was proving in terrible earnest that she could still bite.

The men at the guns worked as they had never worked before, and within the next terrible minute the dynamite guns had fired thirty rounds, and the machine guns had poured out a hurricane of projectiles. Half a dozen of the dynamite shells had struck the *Mallard* in the first few seconds, and within forty seconds her boilers had blown up, and she had gone to the bottom a shattered wreck.

The *Virago* steamed gallantly on, firing her twelve and three-pounders as fast as they could be worked, but a few moments later she too met the same fate. A dynamite shell dropped on the engine-hatch, burst as dynamite always does, downwards, wrecked her engines, and killed every man in the engine-room. Almost simultaneously another hit her conning-tower, wrecking it completely, and disabling the twelve-pounder gun on top of it. Another and another struck her in quick succession, and a hail of three-pound shells and Maxim-bullets swept along her deck, and by the time the way on her had carried her a hundred yards past the post where the *Mallard* had disappeared, she rolled over with a great gap in her side and began to settle down.

"There goes two of them!" yelled Captain Peters, who by this time was half mad with the lust of slaughter. "There comes the *Pocahontas*. Blaze away, Seenyor! Let 'em have it, boys! Put some sudden death into 'em! Hooray for us, who's fond of flame!"

Just then a jet of white smoke mingled with flame leapt over the bows of the *Pocahontas*, which had just rounded the bluff, and the deep, dull bang of a big gun burst through the chorus of the smaller artillery. A hundred-pound six-inch shell came screaming through the air and crashed into the *Minnehaha's* stern. The next instant her after-deck burst up and her sides bulged out. A charge of dynamite, which was just being put into the skipper's gun exploded with the shock, and literally blew him and his gun's crew to fragments. And so Captain Hiram Peters had his wish and died fighting.

Lorrain's gun was disabled at the same moment, and he himself was hurled, stunned and bleeding, across what remained of the deck. The *Pocahontas* came on, slowing working her way into the narrow channel, and keeping up an incessant fire with her lighter guns, but before she had got half way, the fire from the *Minnehaha* stopped, and the once terrible little craft lay silent and harmless, a blackened, shattered wreck, across the narrow reef on which Madame Sybil's pistol-shot had flung her.

But meanwhile another portion of the tragedy of the Gold Magnet was being played out under the smoke-cloud that hung over her ruins. When the cannonade began Madame Sybil and her ladyship were both still on the bridge. Her ladyship came to the door of the wheel-house and, for a moment the two women stared at each other deafened and paralysed by the roar of the guns and the shock of the bursting shells.

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Both were white to the lips, and both were shivering with uncontrollable physical terror. Sybil still had the revolver in her hand, and Jessie's eyes wandered to it, and then to the dead man under the wheel. She shrank back as though to get behind the wood-work of the wheel-house, and then Sybil took a step towards her and said in a high, shrill voice, which sounded strangely through the din of the guns:

"You needn't be afraid—Lady Pendril, as you thought yourself. I'm not going to kill you although you killed my son. I want us both to get away alive from here. I want to see you taken to England and tried as a thief and a murderess, and I want to read about your being hanged. But first of all I want to see them make you give up that thing you find gold with, the thing that you have committed all these crimes for—*you*, a servant girl, who wanted to be a lady and made yourself a felon!"

She almost screamed these last words in Jessie's ear. It was thus that Jessie learnt for the first time that Sybil knew of her possession of the Gold Magnet. Sybil's face was close to hers. All its beauty was gone, and for the moment it looked horrible in its white passion. She didn't answer in words, for no words came to her to say, but she raised both her hands and clenched them and struck blindly and savagely at the livid face and great glaring eyes. Sybil reeled back with a scream of rage, and levelled the revolver at her, but before she could fire it a shell from the *Pocahontas* struck the wheel-house and burst. Jessie remembered seeing a great splash of blood where Sybil's face had been, and then everything went dark and the roar of guns faded away into silence.

About ten minutes later a boat from the *Pocahontas* pulled up to the reef alongside the silent wreck of the *Minnehaha*, and Tristam and Courtland, with half a dozen sailors, climbed up on to what was left of her deck. There was not a man on board who was able to stand on his feet. Men dead and dying, maimed and mangled, lay about among the smashed wood-work and broken, twisted iron in horrible confusion. Here and there a few were groaning and moving feebly in their agony, but these were the only signs of life.

"Good Heavens!" said Courtland as they got up to what had once been the upper deck. "What awful work! I reckon this will be about all the pirate-hunting I shall want. Well, those guns of ours seemed to have saved the hangman a good many jobs. I wonder where the women are. I hope we haven't killed *them*."

"I hope not!" said Tristam as he picked his way across the broken, slippery deck. "Hullo, there's Lorrain! I wonder if he's alive."

Lorrain's body was lying along the deck among the fragments of the funnel. His face was greyish white, his eyes were closed; there was a deep gash across his temple, and his left arm was lying in a position that showed it must be broken. Tristam went and raised his head, and Courtland took out his flask and unscrewed the stopper.

"Try him with a drop of this," he said. "I should like to take one or two of them back with us."

Tristam took the flask and put the mouth of it between Lorrain's teeth. As the brandy trickled into his mouth he coughed and opened his eyes. He drank some more automatically, and then he sat up blinking about him and murmured in Spanish:

"Patricia, have I avenged thee at last?"

Tristam started as he caught the words, and then he said sharply but not angrily:

"It's time you forgot that, Lorrain. There never was anything to avenge, and you've something else to think about now. You're our prisoner. Do you know if there's anyone else alive on board? Where are the women?"

"Oh it's you, is it, it's you!" said Lorrain, looking round with a dull stare at him and trying to struggle to his feet. "Your prisoner, eh—then I've not avenged her! Confound you!"

"I think you'd better let up on that sort of talk, Mr. Lorrain," said Courtland. "I guess there'll be some other people wanting revenge when we come to think about that. Give him a hoist up, Tristam, and let's see if he can stand."

They pulled him up to his feet, his left arm hanging limply by his side, and as they did so the dull stare in his eyes gave place to a glare of hate as he looked round and saw the fearful ruin of what had once been his ship. He walked a few steps with them unresistingly, then his eyes fell upon an unexploded dynamite cartridge lying near the fragments of one of the guns.

The sudden hope of revenge even now gave him new strength. He shook himself free, ran towards it and picked it up. Then he turned with it raised above his head, and was just about to fling it to the deck when Courtland, who was nearest to him, jumped at him, caught his hand just as it was coming down, wrenched the cartridge away from him and tossed it into the water. It was all done in an instant, almost automatically, and before either of them had actually realised how deadly a peril they had been in. The next moment Lorrain stood pinioned between them, gnashing his teeth and cursing with true Spanish-American energy.

Tristam looked at Courtland and said shortly:

"Thanks, old man!"

And Courtland replied: "Just luck—and we're only quits now."

Then a couple of the men came running up and Tristam said to one of them:

"Here, Roberts, this is Mr. Lorrain himself. Tie him up and take him to the boat. Don't let him move on any account."

The two sailors picked up their prisoner with scant regard for his broken arm or his struggles to get free, lashed his right arm to his side, and hurried him off to the boat. Just then another man who had mounted the wreck of the bridge called to Tristam, and they went up and found Jessie and Sybil lying among the ruins of the wheel-house. Sybil was dead and horribly mangled by the splinters of wood and fragments of the shell, but Jessie showed signs of life, though one side of her face was terribly bruised and disfigured, and there was a long, deep cut on the side of her head above her right ear. Courtland's flask came into immediate requisition again, and when they had lifted her out of the debris she coughed and sighed and opened her eyes.

As he picked her up in his arms to take her to the boat, Tristam's thoughts involuntarily went back to the last time he had seen her, at the house in Gower Street in her trim black and white costume and her neat little mob cap. That was really only a few months ago, yet how many years had she lived between that scene and this! When he laid her down gently in the stern-sheets of the boat where Lorrain was already sitting, bound and in sullen silence, she looked up at him and said in her old pretty, gentle voice:

"Thank you, Mr. Tristam! It is very kind of you, but I suppose you are only taking me away to prison?"

"Don't talk about that," he said. "At present you are going on board the *Pocahontas* to be nursed. You'll find Mrs. Tristam there and someone else you know."

"Oh yes, Miss Gwynneth I suppose!" she said, and then her eyes closed and her wounded head sank back on the cushion that he had put under it.

He gave orders for the boat to return at once to the *Pocahontas*, as another one was just reaching the wreck. Then the search for the wounded went on, but out of the whole company of the *Minnehaha* only eight men were carried away with any life in them. When some of the search-party got down into the engine-room they found a man's body lying terribly mangled and scalded among the broken machinery. It was all that was left of Bayard P. Skinner. The shock of striking the rock had flung him down into his beloved engines, and he and they had died together, as no doubt he would have wished to do.

When Tristam got back on board the *Pocahontas* Muriel

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came to meet him at the top of the side-ladder. She took him by the arm and led him away to a deserted part of the deck. Then she opened her hand and showed him a thin, shining strip of metal with a glittering, diamond-like point.

"What do you think that is?" she said.

"Great heavens!—not the Gold Magnet surely?" he said, taking her hand and looking at it. "How in the name of all that's fortunate ——."

"Yes, it is," she interrupted. "The real, veritable Gold Magnet, my own inheritance, my own father's work, come back to me at last, thanks to you."

"And Courtland," he added. "But how did you get—where did you find it?"

"It was in Jessie's hair!" she said. "I believe the poor little wretch carried it there all the time we were looking for it. Gwynneth and I were dressing the wound in her head, you know, and we had to undo her hair and cut some of it off, and there, buried in the plaits, we found this."

"Well," he said, drawing her out of sight behind the shield of a gun, "it's only right that I should be the first to congratulate you on coming into your lawful inheritance. Allow me also to have the honour of kissing the richest as well as the dearest woman in the world!"

There is little more to add to the present portion of the history of the Gold Magnet. Only Lorrain and three of the wounded pirates reached Victoria alive, and there, after due trial, they were justly hanged by the neck until they were dead. Lorrain walked to the scaffold with as little apparent concern as he had strolled up and down the deck of the *Minnehaha* chatting to her ladyship, and died with a gameness worthy of a better end.

Jessie recovered her physical health, but it was soon found that the injury to her head had affected her brain, and when she was placed on her trial as a matter of form, she was found incapable of pleading, and was sent to spend the rest of her days in the criminal asylum, where she passed most of her waking life in walking about the wards or the garden, with a piece of straw tied to a thread, and whispering to everyone she met about the untold treasures that were hidden under the floors and in the ground.

The fifty tons of gold were recovered from the wreck of the *Minnehaha*. What was left of her remained lying rusting and rotting away on the reef which she had so nearly passed to freedom. The gold, as far as possible, was traced to the relatives of its original owners, and handed over to them. Out of the rest the widows and children of the officers and men who had gone down in the destroyers were generously provided for. Naturally neither Tristam or Courtland claimed salvage as they might have done, for after all, what was the value of a few hundredweights of gold to them, now that they had regained the lost key to all the world's hidden treasure?

Here, then, for the present, the story of the Gold Magnet ends. Of the wonders that it wrought in the hands of its new and lawful possessors there will perhaps be more to tell another time.

The End.

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M. N.—Taken bulk for bulk, a man is stronger than an ox.

U. R.—I am afraid you would have great difficulty in obtaining a really good specimen of the Damascus sword, for the art of working and engraving this kind of steel is dead. These swords were made of alternate layers of iron and steel, so finely tempered, that the blade would bend to the hilt without breaking. The edges of these weapons were so keen that no coat of mail could resist them, and the surfaces so highly polished that when a Moslem wished to rearrange his turban he used his sword as a looking-glass.

A. L.—Rice-paper is not made from rice, but from the membranes of the bread-fruit tree.

D. S. M. sends me a post-card bearing the question: "How fast can a man wink?"————By a recent experiment it was proved that a rapid wink occupies about the sixth of a second.

G. G. asks: "Why should a red sunset foretell dry weather?"————Because it indicates that the air towards the west, from which quarter rain may generally be expected, contains little moisture.

Gardener.—You may be surprised to hear that there is a creature even more tenacious of life than the earth-worm, and that is the common sea polyp. If one be cut in two, two creatures are the result; in fact, if it was divided into half-a-dozen sections, the result would be as many animals. They may be turned inside out, and will apparently enjoy themselves as much as if nothing had happened. If two be divided, and placed end to end, the result will be a monster having a head at each extremity.

W. N.—Perhaps your doctor's bill was a bit exorbitant, but you must remember that you are remunerating him not merely for the time occupied in considering your particular case, but for the years of study it cost him to qualify himself to give an opinion.

W. W.—The last time the Tower of London was used as a state prison was in 1820, when the Cato Street conspirators were confined there. You are quite wrong in asserting that "that venerable pile is now no more than a historic relic." It provides accommodation for a whole regiment of soldiers, and is a store for arms.

Guy.—White and yellow are the most frequently recurring colours in precious stones, and the most infrequent is red, which is confined to rubies and garnets.

G. H.—So far as I know only one Englishman has ever been presented by the Chinese Government with the Order of the Yellow Jacket, and that was General Gordon. This distinction was the reward given him for his services in putting down the rising of the Taipings.

Mudlark asks: "How is it that some people can walk through the dirtiest streets and yet scarcely soil their boots, while others, going the same distance, will get their foot-gear splashed with mud from top to bottom?"————Because some people pay a greater amount of care and attention to the way in which they put their feet down, of course. Naturally, a man who walks on a wet day, regardless of puddles, and with no more care than he would if the streets were perfectly clean, cannot expect his boots to be as immaculate as those of the pedestrian who carefully picks his way.

C. H.—You could not do better than choose chrysanthemums for the occasion you mention, for they live longer after being cut than any other flower.

C. G.—Most of the European nations have their nicknames, appropriate and otherwise. British sailors call the Frenchman, in contempt, Johnny Crapaud, but in France he is Jacques Bonhomme. Cousin Michel is the name by which the German is known to the Continental nations. Mynheer sums up the Dutch, Don Whiskerandos the Spaniard, and Lazzaroni the Italian.

H. K. writes to say that in novels he has often come across descriptions of people possessing green eyes, but that he has never yet met anyone in real life with eyes of this colour, and he, therefore, has begun to believe they exist only in the imagination of writers.————Your doubts are quite justifiable, for, strictly speaking, there are none such. There are certain eyes, however, of the iridescent order, which show changing lights and shadows and some sea-green tints, and it is these colour suggestions that have given rise to the popular idea of green eyes.

Sylvia.—It was certainly very "bad form" on your part to dance twice running with the same gentleman. Of course, if he were your *fiancé* it would have been a different matter altogether. Engaged couples may dance together as often as they like.

W. M.—The quivering of the aspen leaf is said to be due to the fact that the leaf stalk is flat on the sides, and so thin about the middle that the slightest breath of wind sets all the leaves wagging horizontally.

U. R.—It is the bell in Westminster tower, not the clock, that is called "Big Ben."

Cautious wants to know if it would be within the bounds of prudence for a man to escort his recent partner at a dance to her carriage upon her departure, or whether she would be likely to think he had further "intentions."————You certainly might safely conduct the lady to her carriage, and, indeed, would not be more than ordinarily polite in so doing. You might even go a little farther, if you wished, namely, see that her wraps were adjusted properly, and should she be gracious in her manner toward you, you might even ask permission to call the next day.

Pedro is evidently another cautious reader, for he wants to know if it is true that kissing is against the laws of health.————I really cannot give a definite answer to this question. The opinions of the highest authorities differ so widely about it—some say that disease lurks in a kiss, while, on the contrary, others declare that, far from being harmful, kissing is most beneficial and "provides us with microbes useful for digestion." You can, therefore, accept which ever opinion most nearly coincides with your own wishes.

C. C.—Fainting at the sight of blood does certainly appear to be rather an effeminate weakness in a man, but I am afraid there is no remedy for it. It may be some consolation to you to hear that your case is not an isolated one. I have often come across similar and even stranger causes of fainting fits. One case was that of a man who swooned away at the sight of beer, another grew faint at the sight of underdone meat, whilst a third was affected in the same way whenever he came into contact with the fumes of a Turkish or Egyptian cigarette.

Ethel wants to know what is the reason that in an ordinary suite of dining-room furniture, that piece called "a lady's armchair" is in reality never made with any arms at all?————Not being in the furniture line personally, I am therefore unable to give my fair reader any technical reason; but I should suggest that they are probably made that way in order that the dresses of the fair occupants may not run any risk of being crushed.

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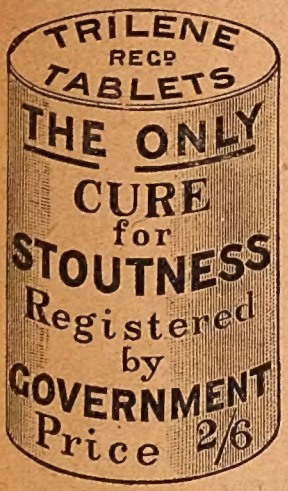

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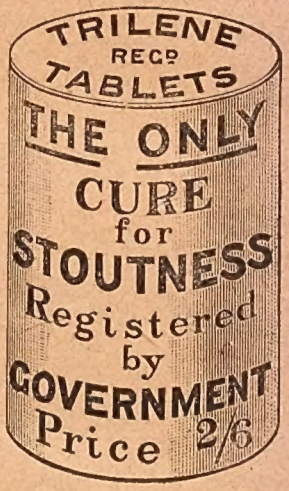

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87, Alexandra Road, Norwich, Oct. 19th, 1896.
"GENTLEMEN,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them—their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was for many years growing too stout; but although the disease was, I consider, chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks; and if I can do anything to promote your interests, I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.
"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

PRINCESS LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me directly your excellent Tablets."

SURGEON-COLONEL E. S. BRANDER, M.D., writes from Jhansi, India: "September 12th, 1897. In my experience your Tablets form an efficient remedy for reducing weight."

LADY CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

MRS. BOSTON, of Clifford Street, South Wigston, Leicester, writes: "I am much thinner and lighter in myself since taking your Tablets."

W. G. LOVE, 4, Kirk Street, Peterhead, N.B., says: "I finished Tablets a fortnight ago, and am reduced a great deal—never felt better in my life."

Convalescent Home, New Brighton, Cheshire.
MISS S. J. PRITCHARD says: "They have done me much good. I am 21lb. lighter already."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk either by means of severe dieting or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a case of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are guaranteed absolutely harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, or any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing Cure for Obesity. The Tablets are sold in boxes at 2s. 6d., and are obtainable from the Trilene Company, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London."

25, Windsor Terrace, Penarth, Cardiff.
MISS M. FLAVELL says: "I have lost 2st., and am much better in health."

Windsor Hotel, Merthyr Vale, South Wales.
MR. J. THOMAS writes: "When I started the Tablets I weighed 17½st., and have got down to 14st. 9lb."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.
MR. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

MRS. HUTCHINSON, 46, Irwell Street, Widnes, Lancashire, writes: "I have taken three boxes and am reduced 2st."

A. D. BILLINGS, Bell Inn, Aldershot, writes: "Have derived great benefit already. Less in size and weight, breathing greatly improved."

MISS WELLS, Aldeburgh Hall, Saxmundham, writes: "I am pleased to say I receive great benefit from them."

MISS DUGGLEBY, 16, New Road, Driffield, writes: "The girl who took your Tablets is reduced about 2½st."

MISS C. E. SINGLETON, 3, Courtenay Terrace, Teignmouth, says "They have done me a great deal of good, and I will do my best to make them known. You may use this letter as you please."

MISS MACPHERSON, Balnagowan Lodge, Methuen, Perth, says: "I have taken one box, and am reduced 1st."

MRS. EDMONDS, Pontyguesta, Pontyohin, Llantrissant, says: "I have lost more than a stone in a very short time."

MARIAN TAYLOR, Church Farm, St. James, Halesworth, says: "I have lost quite 2st. since taking your Tablets."

MISS GILLESPIE, 50, Chaucer Road, Forest Gate, Essex, says: "I have lost just 3st."

E. NICHOLSON, Crossfield, Staniland, Halifax, says: "I am pleased to say your Tablets are lessening my size very much, and my two sisters are going in for your pleasant treatment."

COUNTESS G. FÜRSTENBERG, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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"KEEP ME FROM SINKING DOWN."

This is the chorus of an old negro melody, sung in the days of slavery in America. It is full of heartbreaking appeal to Heaven to help the poor slave in his trouble; to lighten his heavy load; to soften the thoughts of his master towards him; and at last to bring him safe to the City of Golden Streets, where there should be no more labour or sorrow or parting. Thus, in their religious meetings in the woods, and from their cabins on the great plantations when the day's work was done, the ear of the passing stranger caught the wild, pathetic refrain—

"Oh, my Lord; oh, my good Lord,
Keep me from sinking down."

The sense of sinking, the feeling that the supports of Nature are giving way beneath us, is one of the most terrifying things imaginable. People who have been in earthquakes, or been half drowned and then rescued, are able to appreciate it. And in certain diseases it is even more appalling than in the outward world.

A woman, describing a long and weary illness, says that the one element of it, which seemed more than any other to take all the ambition and courage out of her, was a feeling of sinking down. It was not physically painful, but something worse than pain—a sense of the approaching collapse of her entire vitality, as though she were about to be overwhelmed.

"All my life," she says, "I had been hindered and oppressed by weakness. To feel languid and tired was an habitual thing with me. I never knew the lightness, strength, and elasticity that so many of the more fortunate of my sex are blessed with. I ate but little, and even that more as a matter of necessity and custom than from desire. The keen relish for food which I saw in others was quite foreign to my experience. But the absence of appetite was by no means the worst feature of my case, for what I did eat gave me great distress at the stomach and often sharp pains in the chest, back, and sides. Added to this was a certain sensation of sinking that was strange and awful. I cannot set it forth in words. It was as though my body had no power to sustain itself. I may say that no medicine relieved this affrighting feeling.

"I became extremely sensitive and nervous, and ceased to take any pleasure in things and people around me. I lived a miserable life all to myself, and was practically alone even in the midst of my family and friends. Such was my history from year to year. Neither doctors nor drugs did me any good.

"I was still in this situation when, in February, 1894, I read in a small book of what Mother Seigel's Syrup had done for so many similarly circumstanced. Hoping, rather than thinking it might help me, I procured a bottle from Mr. Millns, Gipsy Lane, Forest Gate. It did me much good, as I could eat better and food agreed with me. Cheered up by this favourable result, I continued taking the Syrup, and in a few weeks the bad symptoms left me, and I felt better than ever before in my life.

"This medicine seemed to put new life into me, and since using it I have been free from the low, sinking feeling of which I have spoken. My son, who suffers from liver complaint, has taken Mother Seigel's Syrup with the greatest benefit. You are at liberty to publish what I here state. (Signed) (Mrs.) Emma Blatch, 33 Terrace Road, Upton Manor, Plaistow, Essex, February 8th, 1895."

Mrs. Blatch's complaint was chronic dyspepsia, a tendency to which she probably inherited. She, through her disease only, was half starved all her life up to the time she began to use Seigel's Syrup. Her nerves, being badly nourished—the same as the rest of her system—were feeble and disordered; and one of the results was that sense of sinking, as though her body sought a place of rest—even in the bosom of the earth. Alas! how many of her sex are fainting under the same burden—drawn irresistibly downward? Food—food enjoyed and digested—is their imperative need; and the way to it is through the use of the remedy that saved our correspondent. We know of nothing else that so helpfully responds to the cry, "Keep me from sinking down."

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